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THE WORKS OF GILBERT PARKER

IMPERIAL EDITION

VOLUME

XXII

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Whereaway goes my lad tell me has he gone alone

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GILBERT PARKER

YOU NEVER KNOW YOUR LUCK

WILD YOUTH

NEW YORK

1919

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GILBERT PARKER

YOU NEVER KNOW YOUR LUCK

WILD YOUTH

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1919

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INTRODUCTION

THIS volume contains two novels dealing with the life of prairie people in the town of Askatoon in the far West. *The World for Sale* and the latter portion of *The Money Master* deal with the same life, and *The Money Master* contained some of the characters to be found in *Wild Youth*. *The World for Sale* also was a picture of prairie country with strife between a modern Anglo-Canadian town and a French-Canadian town in the West. These books are of the same people; but *You Never Know Your Luck* and *Wild Youth* have several characters which move prominently through both.

In the introduction to *The World for Sale* in this series, I drew a description of prairie life, and I need not repeat what was said there. In *You Never Know Your Luck* there is a Proem which describes briefly the look of the prairie and suggests characteristics of the life of the people. The basis of the book has a letter written by a wife to her husband at a critical time in his career when he had broken his promise to her. One or two critics said the situation is impossible, because no man would carry a letter unopened for a long number of years. My reply is: that it is exactly what I myself did. I have still a letter written to me which was delivered at my door sixteen years ago. I have never read it, and my reason for not reading it was that I realised, as I think, what its contents were. I knew that the letter would annoy, and there it lies. The writer of the letter who was then my enemy is now my friend. The chief character in the book, Crozier, was an Irishman, with all the Irishman's cleverness, sensitiveness, audacity, and timidity; for both those latter qual-

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ities are characteristic of the Irish race, and as I am half Irish I can understand why I suppressed a letter and why Crozier did.

Crozier is the type of man that comes occasionally to the Dominion of Canada; and Kitty Tynan is the sort of girl that the great West breeds. She did an immoral thing in opening the letter that Crozier had suppressed, but she did it in a good cause—for Crozier's sake; she made his wife write another letter, and she placed it again in the envelope for Crozier to open and see. Whatever lack of morality there was in her act was balanced by the good end to the story, though it meant the sacrifice of Kitty's love for Crozier, and the making of his wife happy once more.

As for *Wild Youth* I make no apology for it. It is still fresh in the minds of the American public, and it is true to the life. Some critics frankly called it melodramatic. I do not object to the term. I know nothing more melodramatic than certain of the plots of Shakespeare's plays. Thomas Hardy is melodramatic; Joseph Conrad is melodramatic; Balzac was melodramatic, and so were Victor Hugo, Charles Dickens, and Sir Walter Scott. The charge of melodrama is not one that should disturb a writer of fiction. The question is, are the characters melodramatic. Will anyone suggest to me the marriage of a girl of seventeen with a man over sixty is melodramatic. It may be, but I think it tragical, and so it was in this case. As for Orlando Guise, I describe the man as I knew him, and he is still alive. Some comments upon the story suggested that it was impossible for a man to spend the night on the prairie with a woman whom he loved without causing her to forget her marriage vows. It is not sentimental to say that is nonsense. It is a prurient mind that only sees evil in a situation of the sort. Why it should be desirable to make a young man and woman commit a misdemeanor to secure the praise of a critic is beyond imagination. It would be easy enough to do. I did it in *The Right of Way*. I did it in others

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of my books. What happens to one man and one woman does not necessarily happen to another. There are men who, for love of a woman, would not take advantage of her insecurity. There are others who would. In my books I have made both classes do their will, and both are true to life. It does not matter what one book is or is not, but it does matter that an author writes his book with a sense of the fitting and the true.

Both these books were written to present that side of life in Canada which is not wintry and forbidding. There is warmth of summer in both tales, and thrilling air and the beauty of the wild countryside. As for the cold, it is severe in most parts of Canada, but the air is dry, and the sharpness is not felt as it is in this damper climate of England. Canadians feel the cold of a March or November day in London far more than the cold of a day in Winnipeg, with the thermometer many degrees below zero. Both these books present the summer side of Canada, which is as delightful as that of any climate in the world; both show the modern western life which is greatly changed since the days when Pierre roamed the very fields where these tales take place. It should never be forgotten that British Columbia has a climate like that of England, where, on the Coast, it is never colder than here, and where there is rain instead of snow in winter.

There is much humour and good nature in the West, and this also I tried to bring out in these two books; and Askatoon is as cosmopolitan as London. Canada in the West has all races, and it was consistent of me to give a Chinaman of noble birth a part to play in the tragicomedy. I have a great respect for the Chinaman, and he is a good servant and a faithful friend. Such a Chinaman as Li Choo I knew in British Columbia, and all I did was to throw him on the Eastern side of the Rockies, a few miles from the border of the farthest Western province. The Chinaman's death was faithful in its

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detail, and it was true to his nature. He had to die, and with the old pagan philosophy, still practised in China and Japan, he chose the better way, to his mind. Princes still destroy themselves in old Japan, as recent history proves.

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YOU NEVER KNOW YOUR LUCK

BEING THE STORY OF A MATRIMONIAL DESERTER

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YOU NEVER KNOW YOUR LUCK

PROEM

HAVE you ever seen it in reaping-time? A sea of gold it is, with gentle billows telling of sleep and not of storm, which, like regiments afoot, salute the reaper and say, "All is fulfilled in the light of the sun and the way of the earth; let the sharp knife fall." The countless million heads are heavy with fruition, and sun glorifies and breeze cradles them to the hour of harvest. The air—like the tingle of water from a mountain-spring in the throat of the worn wayfarer, bringing a sense of the dust of the world flushed away.

Arcady? Look closely. Like islands in the shining yellow sea, are houses—sometimes in a clump of trees, sometimes only like bare-backed domesticity or naked industry in the workfield. Also rising here and there in the expanse, clouds that wind skyward, spreading out in a powdery mist. They look like the rolling smoke of incense, of sacrifice. Sacrifice it is. The vast steam-threshers are mightily devouring what their servants, the monster steam-reapers, have gleaned for them. Soon, when September comes, all that waving sea will be still. What was gold will still be a rusted gold, but near to the earth—the stubble of the corn now lying in vast garners by the railway lines, awaiting transport east and west and south and across the seas.

Not Arcady this, but a land of industry in the grip of industrialists, whose determination to achieve riches

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is, in spite of themselves, chastened by the magnitude and orderly process of nature's travail which is not pain. Here Nature hides her internal striving under a smother of white for many months in every year, when what is now gold in the sun will be a soft—sometimes, too, a hard—shining coverlet like impacted wool. Then, instead of the majestic clouds of incense from the threshers, will rise blue spiral wreaths of smoke from the lonely home. There the farmer rests till spring, comforting himself in the thought that while he waits, far under the snow the wheat is slowly expanding; and as in April, the white frost flies out of the soil into the sun, it will push upward and outward, green and vigorous, greeting his eye with the "What cheer, partner!" of a mate in the scheme of nature.

Not Arcady; and yet many of the joys of Arcady are here—bright, singing birds, wide adventurous rivers, innumerable streams, the squirrel in the wood and the bracken, the wildcat stealing through the undergrowth, the lizard glittering by the stone, the fish leaping in the stream, the plaint of the whippoorwill, the call of the bluebird, the golden flash of the oriole, the *honk* of the wild geese overhead, the whirr of the mallard from the sedge. And, more than all, a human voice declaring by its joy in song that not only God looks upon the world and finds it very good.

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CHAPTER I

"PIONEERS, O PIONEERS"

If you had stood on the borders of Askatoon, a prairie town, on the pathway to the Rockies one late August day not many years ago, you would have heard a fresh young human voice singing into the morning, as its possessor looked, from a coat she was brushing, out over the "field of the cloth of gold," which your eye has already been invited to see. With the gift of singing for joy at all, you should be able to sing very joyously at twenty-two. This morning singer was just that age; and if you had looked at the golden carpet of wheat stretching for scores of miles, before you looked at her, you would have thought her curiously in tone with the scene. She was a symphony in gold—nothing less. Her hair, her cheeks, her eyes, her skin, her laugh, her voice—they were all gold. Everything about her was so demonstratively golden that you might have had a suspicion it was made and not born; as though it was unreal, and the girl herself a proper subject of suspicion. The eyelashes were so long and so black, the eyes were so topaz, the hair was so like such a cloud of gold as would be found on Joan of Arc as seen by a mediæval painter, that an air of faint artificiality surrounded what was in every other way a remarkable effort of nature to give this region, where she was so very busy, a keynote.

Poseurs have said that nature is garish or exaggerated more often than not; but it is a libel. She is

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aristocratic to the *n*th degree, and is never over done; courage she has, but no ostentation. There was, however, just a slight touch of over-emphasis in this singing-girl's presentation—that you were bound to say, if you considered her quite apart from her place in this nature-scheme. She was not wholly aristocratic; she was lacking in that high, social refinement which would have made her gold not so golden, her black eyelashes not so black. Being unaristocratic is not always a matter of birth, though it may be a matter of parentage.

Her parentage was honest and respectable and not exalted. Her father had been an engineer, who had lost his life on a new railway of the West. His widow had received a pension from the company insufficient to maintain her, and so she kept boarders, the coat of one of whom her daughter was now brushing as she sang. The widow herself was the origin of the girl's slight disqualification for being of that higher circle of selection which nature arranges long before society makes its judicial decision. The father had been a man of high intelligence, which his daughter to a real degree inherited; but the mother, as kind a soul as ever lived, was a product of southern English rural life—a little sumptuous, but wholesome, and for her daughter's sake at least, keeping herself well and safely within the moral pale in the midst of marked temptations. She was forty-five, and it said a good deal for her ample but proper graces that at forty-five she had numerous admirers. The girl was English in appearance, with a touch perhaps of Spanish—why, who can say? Was it because of those Spanish hidalgoes wrecked on the Irish coast long since? Her ind and her tongue, however, were Irish like her

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father's. You would have liked her,—everybody did,—yet you would have thought that nature had failed in self-confidence for once, she was so pointedly designed to express the ancient dame's colour-scheme, even to the delicate auriferous down on her youthful cheek and the purse-proud look of her faintly *retroussé* nose; though in fact she never had had a purse and scarcely needed one. In any case she had an ample pocket in her dress.

This fairly full description of her is given not because she is the most important person in the story, but because the end of the story would have been entirely different had it not been for her; and because she herself was one of those who are so much the sport of circumstances or chance that they express the full meaning of the title of this story. As a line beneath the title explains, the tale concerns a matrimonial deserter. Certainly this girl had never deserted matrimony, though she had on more than one occasion avoided it; and there had been men mean and low enough to imagine they might allure her to the conditions of matrimony without its status.

As with her mother the advertisement of her appearance was wholly misleading. A man had once said to her that "she looked too gay to be good," but in all essentials she was as good as she was gay, and indeed rather better. Her mother had not kept boarders for seven years without getting some useful knowledge of the world, or without imparting useful knowledge; and there were men who, having paid their bills on demand, turned from her wiser if not better men. Because they had pursued the old but inglorious profession of hunting tame things, Mrs. Tyndall Tynan had exacted compensation in one way

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or another—by extras, by occasional and deliberate omission of table luxuries, and by making them pay for their own mending, which she herself only did when her boarders behaved themselves well. She scored in any contest—in spite of her rather small brain, large heart, and ardent appearance. A very clever, shiftless Irish husband had made her develop shrewdness, and she was so busy watching and fending her daughter that she did not need to watch and fend herself to the same extent as she would have done had she been free and childless and thirty. The widow Tynan was practical, and she saw none of those things which made her daughter stand for minutes at a time and look into the distance over the prairie towards the sunset light or the grey-blue foothills. She never sang—she had never sung a note in her life; but this girl of hers, with a man's coat in her hand, and eyes on the joyous scene before her, was for ever humming or singing. She had even sung in the church choir till she declined to do so any longer, because strangers stared at her so; which goes to show that she was not so vain as people of her colouring sometimes are. It was just as bad, however, when she sat in the congregation; for then, too, if she sang, people stared at her. So it was that she seldom went to church at all; but it was not because of this that her ideas of right and wrong were quite individual and not conventional, as the tale of the matrimonial deserter will show.

This was not church, however, and briskly applying a light whisk-broom to the coat, she hummed one of the songs her father taught her when he was in his buoyant or in his semtinental moods, and that was a fair proportion of the time. It used to perplex her—

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the thrilling buoyancy and the creepy melancholy which alternately mastered her father; but as a child she had become so inured to it that she was not surprised at the alternate pensive gaiety and the blazing exhilaration of the particular man whose coat she now dusted long after there remained a speck of dust upon it. This was the song she sang:

"Whereaway, whereaway goes the lad that once was mine?
Hereaway I waited him, hereaway and oft;
When I sang my song to him, bright his eyes began to shine—
Hereaway I loved him well, for my heart was soft.

"Hereaway my heart was soft; when he kissed my happy eyes,
Held my hand, and pressed his cheek warm against my brow,
Home I saw upon the earth, heaven stood there in the skies—
'Whereaway, whereaway goes my lover now?'"

"Whereaway goes my lad—tell me, has he gone alone?
Never harsh word did I speak, never hurt I gave;
Strong he was and beautiful; like a heron he has flown—
Hereaway, hereaway will I make my grave.

"When once more the lad I loved hereaway, hereaway,
Comes to lay his hand in mine, kiss me on the brow,
I will whisper down the wind, he will weep to hear me say—
'Whereaway, whereaway goes my lover now?'"

There was a plaintive quality in the voice of this russet maiden in perfect keeping with the music and the words; and though her lips smiled, there was a deep, wistful look in her eyes more in harmony with the coming autumn than with this gorgeous harvest-time.

For a moment after she had finished singing she stood motionless, absorbed by the far horizon; then

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suddenly she gave a little shake of the body and said in a brisk, playfully chiding way:

"Kitty Tynan, Kitty Tynan, what a girl you are!"

There was no one near, so far as eye could see, so it was clear that the words were addressed to herself.

She was expressing that wonder which so many people feel at discovering in themselves long-concealed characteristics, or find themselves doing things out of their natural orbit, as they think. If any one had told Kitty Tynan that she had rare imagination, she would have wondered what was meant. If any one had said to her, "What are you dreaming about, Kitty?" she would have understood, however, for she had had fits of dreaming ever since she was a child, and they had increased during the past few years—since the man came to live with them whose coat she was brushing. Perhaps this was only imitation, because the man had a habit of standing or sitting still and looking into space for minutes—and on Sundays for hours—at a time; and often she had watched him as he lay on his back in the long grass, head on a hillock, hat down over his eyes, while the smoke from his pipe came curling up from beneath the rim. Also she had seen him more than once sitting with a letter before him and gazing at it for many minutes together. She had also noted that it was the same letter on each occasion; that it was a closed letter, and also that it was unstamped. She knew that, because she had seen it in his desk—the desk once belonging to her father, a sloping thing with a green-baize top. Sometimes he kept it locked, but very often he did not; and more than once, when he had asked her to get him something from the desk, not out of meanness, but chiefly because her moral standard had not a multitude of

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delicate punctilios, she had examined the envelope curiously. The envelope bore a woman's handwriting, and the name on it was not that of the man who owned the coat—and the letter. The name on the envelope was Shiel Crozier, but the name of the man who owned the coat was J. G. Kerry—James Gathorne Kerry, so he said.

Kitty Tynan had certainly enough imagination to make her cherish a mystery. She wondered greatly what it all meant. Never in anything else had she been inquisitive or prying where the man was concerned; but she felt that this letter had the heart of a story, and she had made up fifty stories which she thought would fit the case of J. G. Kerry, who for over four years had lived in her mother's house. He had become part of her life, perhaps just because he was a man,—and what home is a real home without a man?—perhaps because he always had a kind, quiet, confidential word for her, or a word of stimulating cheerfulness; indeed, he showed in his manner occasionally almost a boisterous hilarity. He undoubtedly was what her mother called "a queer dick," but also "a pippin with a perfect core," which was her way of saying that he was a man to be trusted with herself and with her daughter; one who would stand loyally by a friend or a woman. He had stood by them both when Augustus Burlingame, the lawyer, who had boarded with them when J. G. Kerry first came, coarsely exceeded the bounds of liberal friendliness which marked the household, and by furtive attempts at intimacy began to make life impossible for both mother and daughter. Burlingame took it into his head, when he received notice that his rooms were needed for another boarder, that J. G. Kerry was the

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cause of it. Perhaps this was not without reason, since Kerry had seen Kitty Tynan angrily unclasping Burlingame's arm from around her waist, and had used cutting and decisive words to the sensualist afterwards.

There had taken the place of Augustus Burlingame a land-agent—Jesse Bulrush—who came and went like a catapult, now in domicile for three days together, now gone for three weeks; a voluble, gaseous, humorous fellow, who covered up a well of commercial evasiveness, honesty and adroitness by a perspiring gaiety natural in its origin and convenient for harmless deceit. He was fifty, and no gallant save in words; and, as a wary bachelor of many years' standing, it was a long time before he showed a tendency to blandish a good-looking middle-aged nurse named Egan who also lodged with Mrs. Tynan; though even a plain-faced nurse in uniform has an advantage over a handsome unprofessional woman. Jesse Bulrush and J. G. Kerry were friends—became indeed such confidential friends to all appearance, though their social origin was evidently so different, that Kitty Tynan, when she wished to have a pleasant conversation which gave her a glow for hours afterwards, talked to the fat man of his lean and aristocratic-looking friend.

"Got his head where it ought to be—on his shoulders; and it ain't for playing football with," was the frequent remark of Mr. Bulrush concerning Mr. Kerry. This always made Kitty Tynan want to sing, she could not have told why, save that it seemed to her the equivalent of a long history of the man whose past lay in mists that never lifted, and whom even the inquisitive Burlingame had been unable to "discover" when he lived in the same house. But then Kitty Tynan was as fond of singing as a canary, and relieved her feelings constantly by this virtuous and becoming

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means, with her good contralto voice. She was indeed a creature of contradictions; for if ever any one should have had a soprano voice it was she. She looked a soprano.

What she was thinking of as she sang with Kerry's coat in her hand it would be hard to discover by the process of elimination, as the detectives say when tracking down a criminal. It is, however, of no consequence; but it was clear that the song she sang had moved her, for there was the glint of a tear in her eye as she turned towards the house, the words of the lyric singing themselves over in her brain:

"Hereaway my heart was soft; when he kissed my happy eyes,
Held my hand, and pressed his cheek warm against my brow,
Home I saw upon the hearth, heaven stood there in the skies—
'Whereaway, whereaway goes my lover now?'"

She knew that no lover had left her; that none was in the habit of laying his warm cheek against her brow; and perhaps that was why she had said aloud to herself, "Kitty Tynan, Kitty Tynan, what a girl you are!" Perhaps—and perhaps not.

As she stepped forward towards the door she heard a voice within the house, and she quickened her footsteps. The blood in her face, the look in her eye quickened also. And now a figure appeared in the doorway—a figure in shirt-sleeves, which shook a fist at the hurrying girl.

"Villain!" he said gaily, for he was in one of his absurd, ebullient moods—after a long talk with Jesse Bulrush. "Hither with my coat; my spotless coat in a spotted world,—the unbelievable anomaly—

"'For the earth of a dusty to-day
Is the dust of an earthy to-morrow.'"

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When he talked like this she did not understand him, but she thought it was clever beyond thinking—a heavenly jumble. "If it wasn't for me you'd be carted for rubbish," she replied joyously as she helped him on with his coat, though he had made a motion to take it from her.

"I heard you singing—what was it?" he asked cheerily, while it could be seen that his mind was preoccupied. The song she had sung, floating through the air, had seemed familiar to him, while he had been greatly engaged with a big business thing he had been planning for a long time, with Jesse Bulrush in the background or foreground, as scout or rear-guard or what you will:

"'Whereaway, whereaway goes the lad that once was mine?
Hereaway, I waited him, hereaway and oft——'"

she hummed with an exaggerated gaiety in her voice, for the song had saddened her, she knew not why.

At the words the flaming exhilaration of the man's face vanished and his eyes took on a poignant, distant look.

"That—oh, that!" he said, and with a little jerk of the head and a clenching of the hand he moved towards the street.

"Your hat!" she called after him, and ran inside the house. An instant later she gave it to him. Now his face was clear and his eyes smiled kindly at her.

"'Whereaway, hereaway' is a wonderful song," he said. "We used to sing it when I was a boy—and after, and after. It's an old song—old as the hills. Well, thanks, Kitty Tynan. What a girl you are—to be so kind to a fellow like me!"

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"Kitty Tynan, what a girl you are!"—these were the very words she had used about herself a little while before. The song—why did it make Mr. Kerry take on such a queer look all at once when he heard it? Kitty watched him striding down the street into the town.

Now a voice—a rich, quizzical, kindly voice—called out to her:

"Come, come, Miss Tynan, I want to be helped on with my coat," it said.

Inside the house a fat, awkward man was struggling, or pretending to struggle, into his coat.

"Roll into it, Mr. Rolypoly," she answered cheerily as she entered.

"Of course I'm not the star boarder—nothing for me!" he said in affected protest.

"A little more to starboard and you'll get it on," she retorted with a glint of her late father's raillery, and she gave the coat a twitch which put it right on the ample shoulders.

"Bully! bully!" he cried. "I'll give you the tip for the Askatoon cup."

"I'm a Christian. I hate horse-racers and gamblers," she returned mockingly.

"I'll turn Christian—I want to be loved," he bleated from the doorway.

"Roll on, proud porpoise!" she rejoined, which shows that her conversation was not quite aristocratic at all times.

"Golly, but she's a gold dollar in a gold bank," remarked Jesse Bulrush warmly as he lurched into the street.

The girl stood still in the middle of the room looking dreamily down the way the two men had gone.

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The quiet of the late summer day surrounded her. She heard the dizzy din of the bees, the sleepy grinding of the grass hoppers, the sough of the solitary pine at the door, and then behind them all a whizzing, machine-like sound. This particular sound went on and on.

She opened the door of the next room. Her mother sat at a sewing-machine intent upon some work, the needle eating up a spreading piece of cloth.

"What are you making, mother?" Kitty asked.

"New blinds for Mr. Kerry's bedroom—he likes this green colour," the widow added with a slight flush, due to leaning over the sewing-machine, no doubt.

"Everybody does everything for him," remarked the girl almost pettishly.

"That's a nice spirit, I must say!" replied her mother reprovingly, the machine almost stopping.

"If I said it in a different way it would be all right," the other returned with a smile, and she repeated the words with a winning soft inflection, like a born actress.

"Kitty—Kitty Tynan, what a girl you are!" declared her mother, and she bent smiling over the machine, which presently buzzed on its devouring way.

Three people had said the same thing within a few minutes. A look of pleasure stole over the girl's face, and her bosom rose and fell with a happy sigh. Somehow it was quite a wonderful day for her.

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CHAPTER II

CLOSING THE DOORS

THERE are many people who, in some subtle psychological way, are very like their names; as though some one had whispered to "the parents of this child" the name designed for it from the beginning of time. So it was with Shiel Crozier. Does not the name suggest a man lean and flat, sinewy, angular and isolated like a figure in one of El Greco's pictures in the Prado at Madrid? Does not the name suggest a figure of elongated humanity with a touch of ancient mysticism and yet also of the fantastical humour of Don Quixote?

In outward appearance Shiel Crozier, otherwise J. G. Kerry, of Askatoon, was like his name for the greater part of the time. Take him in repose, and he looked a lank ascetic who dreamed of a happy land where flagellation was a joy and pain a panacea. In action, however, as when Kitty Tynan helped him on with his coat, he was a pure improvisation of nature. He had a face with a Cromwellian mole, which broke out in emotion like an April day, with eyes changing from a blue-grey to the deepest ultramarine that ever delighted the soul and made the reputation of an Old Master. Even in the prairie town of Askatoon, where every man is so busy that he scarcely knows his own children when he meets them, and almost requires an introduction to his wife when the door closes on them at bedtime, people took a second look at him when he passed. Many who came in much direct contact with

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him, as Augustus Burlingame the lawyer had done, tried to draw from him all there was to tell about himself; which is a friendly custom of the far West. The native-born greatly desire to tell about themselves. They wear their hearts on their sleeves, and are childlike in the frank recitals of all they were and are and hope to be. This covers up also a good deal of business acumen, shrewdness, and secretiveness which is not so childlike and bland.

In this they are in sharp contrast to those not native-born. These come from many places on the earth, and they are seldom garrulously historical. Some of them go to the prairie country to forget they ever lived before, and to begin the world again, having been hurt in life undeservingly; some go to bury their mistakes or worse in pioneer work and adventure; some flee from a wrath that would devour them —the law, society, or a woman.

This much must be said at once for Crozier, that he had no crime to hide. It was not because of crime that "He buckles up his talk like the bellyband on a broncho," as Malachi Deely, the exile from Tralee, said of him; and Deely was a man of "horse-sense," no doubt because he was a horse-doctor—"a veterenny surgeon," as his friends called him when they wished to flatter him. Deely supplemented this chaste remark about the broncho with the observation that, "Same as the broncho, you buckle him tightest when you know the divil is stirring in his underbrush." And he added further, "'Tis a woman that's put the mumplaster on his tongue, Sibley, and I bet you a hundred it's another man's wife."

Like many a speculator, Malachi Deely would have made no profit out of his bet in the end, for Shiel

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Crozier had had no trouble with the law, or with another man's wife, nor yet with any single maid—not yet; though there was now Kitty Tynan in his path. Yet he had had trouble. There was hint of it in his occasional profound abstraction; but more than all else in the fact that here he was, a gentleman, having lived his life for over four years past as a sort of horse-expert, overseer, and stud-manager for Terry Brennan, the absentee millionaire. In the opinion of the West, "big-bugs" did not come down to this kind of occupation unless they had been roughly handled by fate or fortune.

"Talk? Watch me now, he talks like a testimonial in a frame," said Malachi Deely on the day this tale opens, to John Sibley, the gambling young farmer who, strange to say, did well out of both gambling and farming.

"Words to him are like nuts to a monkey. He's an artist, that man is. Been in the circles where the band plays good and soft, where the music smells—fairly smells like parfumery," responded Sibley. "I'd like to get at the bottom of him. There's a real good story under his asbestos vest—something that'd make a man call for the oh-be-joyful, same as I do now."

After they had seen the world through the bottom of a tumbler Deely continued the gossip. "Watch me now, been a friend of dukes in England and Ireland, that Mr. James Gathorne Kerry, as any one can see; and there he is feelin' the hocks of a filly or openin' the jaws of a stud horse, age-hunting! Why, you needn't tell me—I've had my mind made up ever since the day he broke the temper of Terry Brennan's Inniskillen chestnut, and won the gold cup with her afterwards. He just sort of appeared out of the mist

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of the marnin', there bein' a divil's lot of excursions and conferences and holy gatherin's in Askatoon that time back, ostensible for the business which their names denote, like the Diocesan Conference and the Pure White Water Society. That was their bluff; but they'd come herealong for one good pure white diocesan thing before all, and that was to see the dandiest horse-racing which ever infested the West. Come—he come like that!"—Deely made a motion like a swoop of an aeroplane to earth—"and here he is buckin' about like a rough-neck same as you and me; but yet a gent, a swell, a cream della cream, that's turned his back on a lady—a lady not his own wife, that's my sure and sacred belief."

"You certainly have got women on the brain," retorted Sibley. "I ain't ever seen such a man as you. There never was a woman crossing the street on a muddy day that you didn't sprint to get a look at her ankles. Behind everything you see a woman. Horses is your profession, but woman is your practice."

"There ain't but one thing worth livin' for, and that's a woman," remarked Deely.

"Do you tell Mrs. Deely that?" asked Sibley.

"Watch me now, she knows. What woman is there don't know when her husband is what he is! And it's how I know that the trouble with James Gathorne Kerry is a woman. I know the signs. Divils me own, he's got 'em in his face."

"He's got in his face what don't belong here and what you don't know much about—never having kept company with that sort," rejoined Sibley.

"The way he lives and talks—'No, thank you, I don't care for anny thing,' says he, when you're standin' at the door of a friendly saloon, which is estab-

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lished by law to bespeak peace and goodwill towards men, and you ask him pleasant to step inside. He don't seem to have a single vice. Haven't we tried him? There was Belle Bingley, all frizzy hair and a kicker; we put her on to him. But he give her ten dollars to buy a hat on condition she behaved like a lady in the future—smilin' at her, the divil! And Belle, with temper like dinnemite, took it kneelin' as it were, and smiled back at him—her! Drink, women—nothin' seems to have a hold on him. What's his vice? Sure, then, that's what I say, what's his vice? He's got to have one; anny man as is a man has to have one vice."

"Bosh! Look at me," rejoined Sibley. "Drink—women—nit! Not for me! I've got no vice. I don't even smoke."

"No vice? Begobs, yours has got you like a tire on a wheel! Vice—what do you call gamblin'? It's the biggest vice ever tuk grip of a man. It's like a fever, and it's got you, John, like the nail on your finger."

"Well, p'r'aps, he's got that vice too. P'r'aps J. G. Kerry's got that vice same as me."

"Annyhow, we'll get to know all we want when he goes into the witness box at the Logan murder trial next week. That's what I'm waitin' for," Deely returned, with a grin of anticipation. "That drug-eating Gus Burlingame's got a grudge against him somehow, and when a lawyer's got a grudge against you it's just as well to look where y' are goin'. Burlingame don't care what he does to get his way in court. What set him against Kerry I ain't sure, but, bedad, I think it's looks. Burlingame goes in for lookin' like a picture in a frame—gold seals hangin' beyant his vest-pocket, broad silk cord to his eye-glass, loose flowin'

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tie, and long hair—makes him look pretentuous and showy. But your 'Mr. Kerry, sir,' he don't have anny tricks to make him look like a doge from Veenis and all the eyes of the females battin' where'er he goes. Jealousy, John Sibley, me boy, is a cruil thing."

"Why is it *you* ain't jealous of him? There's plenty of women that watch you go down-town—you got a name for it, anyway," remarked Sibley maliciously.

Deely nodded sagely. "Watch me now, that's right, me boy. I got a name for it, but I want the game without the name, and that's why I ain't puttin' on anny airs—none at all. I depend on me tongue, not on me looks, which goes against me. I like Mr. J. G. Kerry. I've plenty dealin's with him, naturally, both of us being in the horse business, and I say he's right as a minted dollar as he goes now. Also, and behold, I'd take my oath he never done annything to blush for. His touble's been a woman—wayward woman what stoops to folly! I give up tryin' to pump him just as soon as I made up my mind it was a woman. That shuts a man's mouth like a poor-box."

"Next week's fixed for the Logan killin' case, is it?"

"Monday comin', for sure. I wouldn't like to be in Mr. Kerry's shoes. Watch me now, if he gives the evidence they say he can give—the prasecution say it—that M'Mahon Gang behind Logan 'll get him sure as guns, one way or another."

"Some one ought to give Mr. Kerry the tip to get out and not give evidence," remarked Sibley sagely.

Deely shook his head vigorously. "Begobs, he's had the tip all right, but he's not goin'. He's got as much fear as a canary has whiskers. He doesn't want

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to give evidence, he says, but he wants to see the law do its work. Burlingame 'll try to make it out manslaughter; but there's a widow with children to suffer for the manslaughter, just as much as though it was murder, and there isn't a man that doesn't think murder was the game, and the grand joory had that idea too."

"Between Gus Burlingame and that M'Mahon bunch of horse-thieves, the stranger in a strange land 'll have to keep his eyes open, I'm thinkin'."

"Divils me darlin', his eyes are open all right," returned Deely.

"Still, I'd like to jog his elbow," Sibley answered reflectively. "It couldn't do any harm, and it might do good."

Deely nodded good-naturedly. "If you want to so bad as that, John, you've got the chance, for he's up at the Sovereign Bank now. I seen him leave the Great Overland Railway Bureau ten minutes ago and get away quick to the bank."

"What's he got on at the bank and the railway?"

"Some big deal, I guess. I've seen him with Studd Bradley——"

"The Great North Trust Company boss?"

"On it, my boy, on it—the other day as thick as thieves. Studd Bradley doesn't knit up with an outsider from the old country unless there's reason for it —good gold-currency reasons."

"A land deal, eh?" ventured Sibley. "What did I say—speculation, that's his vice, same as mine! P'r'aps that's what ruined him. Cards, speculation, what's the difference? And he's got a quiet look, same as me."

Deely laughed loudly. "And bursts out same as

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you! Quiet one hour like a mill-pond or a well, and then—*swhish*, he's blazin'! He's a volcano in harness, that spalpeen."

"He's a volcano that doesn't erupt when there's danger," responded Sibley. "It's when there's just fun on that his volcano gets loose. I'll go wait for him at the bank. I got a fellow-feeling for Mr. Kerry. I'd like to whisper in his ear that he'd better be lookin' sharp for the M'Mahon Gang, and that if he's a man of peace he'd best take a holiday till after next week, or get smallpox or something."

The two friends lounged slowly up the street, and presently parted near the door of the bank. As Sibley waited, his attention was drawn to a window on the opposite side of the street at an angle from themselves. The light was such that the room was revealed to its farthest corners, and Sibley noted that three men were evidently carefully watching the bank, and that one of the men was Studd Bradley, the so-called boss. The others were local men of some position commercially and financially in the town. Sibley did not give any sign that he noticed the three men, but he watched carefully from under the rim of his hat. His imagination, however, read a story of consequence in the secretive vigilance of the three, who evidently thought that, standing far back in the room, they could not be seen.

Presently the door of the bank opened, and Sibley saw Studd Bradley lean forward eagerly, then draw back and speak hurriedly to his companions, using a gesture of satisfaction.

"Something damn funny there!" Sibley said to himself, and stepped forward to Crozier with a friendly exclamation.

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Crozier turned rather impatiently, for his face was aflame with some exciting reflection. At this moment his eyes were the deepest blue that could be imagined —an almost impossible colour, like that of the Mediterranean when it reflects the perfect sapphire of the sky. There was something almost wonderful in their expression. A woman once said as she looked at a picture of Herschel, whose eyes had the unworldly gaze of the great dreamer looking beyond this sphere, "The stars startled him." Such a look was in Crozier's eyes now, as though he was seeing the bright end of a long road, the desire of his soul.

That, indeed, was what he saw. After two years of secret negotiation he had (inspired by information dropped by Jesse Bulrush, his fellow-boarder) made definite arrangements for a big land-deal in connection with the route of a new railway and a town-site, which would mean more to him than any one could know. If it went through, he would, for an investment of ten thousand dollars, have a hundred and fifty thousand dollars; and that would solve an everlasting problem for him.

He had reached a critical point in his enterprise. All that was wanted now was ten thousand dollars in cash to enable him to close the great bargain and make his hundred and fifty thousand. But to want ten thousand dollars and to get it in a given space of time, when you have neither securities, cash, nor real estate, is enough to keep you awake at night. Crozier had been so busy with the delicate and difficult negotiations that he had not deeply concerned himself with the absence of the necessary ten thousand dollars. He thought he could get the money at any time, so good was the proposition; and it was best to defer

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raising it to the last moment lest some one learning the secret should forestall him. He must first have the stake to be played for before he moved to get the cash with which to make the throw. This is not generally thought a good way, but it was his way, and it had yet to be tested.

There was no cloud of apprehension, however, in Crozier's eyes as they met those of Sibley. He liked Sibley. At this point it is not necessary to say why. The reason will appear in due time. Sibley's face had always something of that immobility and gravity which Crozier's face had part of the time—paler, less intelligent, with dark lines and secret shadows absent from Crozier's face; but still with some of the El Greco characteristics which marked so powerfully that of the man who passed as J. G. Kerry.

"Ah, Sibley," he said, "glad to see you! Anything I can do for you?"

"It's the other way if there's any doing at all," was the quick response.

"Well, let's walk along together," remarked Crozier a little abstractedly, for he was thinking hard about his great enterprise.

"We might be seen," said Sibley, with an obvious undermeaning meant to provoke a question.

Crozier caught the undertone of suggestion. "Being about to burgle the bank, it's well not to be seen together—eh?"

"No, I'm not in on that business, Mr. Kerry. I'm for breaking banks, not burgling 'em," was the cheerful reply.

They laughed, but Crozier knew that the observant gambling farmer was not talking at haphazard. They had met on the highway, as it were, many times since

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Crozier had come to Askatoon, and Crozier knew his man.

"Well, what *are* we going to do, and who will see us if we do it?" Crozier asked briskly.

"Studd Bradley and his secret-service corps have got their eyes on this street—and on you," returned Sibley dryly.

Crozier's face sobered and his eyes became less emotional. "I don't see them anywhere," he answered, but looking nowhere.

"They're in Gus Burlingame's office. They had you under observation while you were in the bank."

"I couldn't run off with the land, could I?" Crozier remarked dryly, yet suggestively, in his desire to see how much Sibley knew.

"Well, you said it was a bank. I've no more idea what it is you're tryin' to run off with than I know what an ace is goin' to do when there's a joker in the pack," remarked Sibley; "but I thought I'd tell you that Bradley and his lot are watchin' you gettin' ready to run." Then he hastily told what he had seen.

Crozier was reassured. It was natural that Bradley & Co. should take an interest in his movements. They would make a pile of money if he pulled off the deal—far more than he would. It was not strange that they should watch his invasion of the bank. They knew he wanted money, and a bank was the place to get it. That was the way he viewed the matter on the instant. He replied to Sibley cheerfully.

"A hundred to one is a lot when you win it," he said enigmatically.

"It depends on how much you have on," was Sibley's quiet reply—"a dollar or a thousand dollars.

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If you've got a big thing on, and you've got an outsider that you think is goin' to win and beat the favourite, it's just as well to run no risks. Believe me, Mr. Kerry, if you've got anything on that asks for your attention, it'd be sense and saving if you didn't give evidence at the Logan Trial next week. It's pretty well-guessed what you're goin' to say and what you know, and you take it from me, the M'Mahon mob that's behind Logan 'll have it in for you. They're terrors when they get goin', and if your evidence puts one of that lot away, ther'll be trouble for you. I wouldn't do it—honest, I wouldn't. I've been out West here a good many years, and I know the place and the people. It's a good place, and there's lots of first-class people here, but there's a few offscourings that hang like wolves on the edge of the sheepfold, ready to murder and git."

"*That* was what you wanted to see me about, wasn't it?" Crozier asked quietly.

"Yes; the other was just a shot on the chance. I don't like to see men sneakin' about and watching. If they do, you can bet there's something wrong. But the other thing, the Logan Trial business, is a dead certainty. You're only a new-comer, in a kind of way, and you don't need to have the same responsibility as the rest. The Law 'll get what it wants whether you chip in or not. Let it alone. What's the Law ever done for you that you should run risks for it? It's straight talk, Mr. Kerry. Have a cancer in the bowels next week or go off to see a dyin' brother, but don't give evidence at the Logan Trial—don't do it. I got a feeling—I'm superstitious—all sportsmen are. By following my instincts I've saved myself a whole lot in my time."

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"Yes; all men that run chances have their superstitions, and they're not to be sneered at," replied Crozier thoughtfully. "If you see black, don't play white; if you see a chestnut crumpled up, put your money on the bay even when the chestnut is a favourite. Of course you're superstitions, Sibley. The tan and the green baize are covered with ghosts that want to help you, if you'll let them."

Sibley's mouth opened in amazement. Crozier was speaking with the look of the man who hypnotises himself, who "sees things," who dreams as only the gambler and the plunger on the turf do dream, not even excepting the latter-day Irish poets.

"Say, I was right what I said to Deely—I was right," remarked Sibley almost huskily, for it seemed to him as though he had found a long-lost brother. No man except one who had staked all he had again and again could have looked or spoken like that.

Crozier looked at the other thoughtfully for a moment, then he said:

"I don't know what you said to Deely, but I do know that I'm going to the Logan Trial in spite of the M'Mahon mob. I don't feel about it as you do. I've got a different feeling, Sibley. I'll play the game out. I shall not hedge. I shall not play for safety. It's everything on the favourite this time."

"You'll excuse me, but Gus Burlingame is for the defence, and he's got his knife into you," returned Sibley.

"Not yet." Crozier smiled sardonically.

"Well, I apologise, but what I've said, Mr. Kerry, is said as man to man. You're ridin' game in a tough place, as any man has to do who starts with only his pants and his head on. That's the way you begun

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here, I guess; and I don't want to see your horse tumble because some one throws a fence-rail at its legs. Your class has enemies always in a new country —jealousy, envy."

The lean, aristocratic, angular Crozier, with a musing look on his long face, grown ascetic again, as he held out his hand and gripped that of the other, said warmly: "I'm just as much obliged to you as though I took your advice, Sibley. I am not taking it, but I am taking a pledge to return the compliment to you if ever I get the chance."

"Well, most men get chances of that kind," was the gratified reply of the gambling farmer, and then Crozier turned quickly and entered the doorway of the British Bank, the rival of that from which he had turned in brave disappointment a little while before.

Left alone in the street, Sibley looked back with the instinct of the hunter. As he expected, he saw a head thrust out from the window where Studd Bradley and his friends had been. There was an hotel opposite the British Bank. He entered and waited. Bradley and one of his companions presently came in and seated themselves far back in the shadow, where they could watch the doorway of the bank.

It was quite a half-hour before Shiel Crozier emerged from the bank. His face was set and pale. For an instant he stood as though wondering which way to go, then he moved up the street the way he had come.

Sibley heard a low, poisonous laugh of triumph rankle through the hotel office. He turned round. Bradley, the over-fed, over-confident, over-estimated financier, laid a hand on the shoulder of his companion as they moved towards the door.

"That's another gate shut," he said. "I guess we

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can close 'em all with a little care. It's working all right. He's got no chance of raising the cash," he added, as the two passed the chair where Sibley sat with his hat over his eyes, chewing an unlighted cigar.

"I don't know what it is, but it's dirt—and muck at that," John Sibley remarked as he rose from his chair and followed the two into the street.

Bradley and his friends were trying steadily to close up the avenues of credit to the man to whom the success of his enterprise meant so much. To crowd him out would mean an extra hundred and fifty thousand dollars for themselves.

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CHAPTER III

THE LOGAN TRIAL AND WHAT CAME OF IT

WHAT the case was in which Shiel Crozier was to give evidence is not important; what came from the giving of his testimony is all that matters; and this story would never have been written if he had not entered the witness-box.

A court-room at any time seems a little warmer than any other spot to all except the prisoner; but on a July day it is likely to be a punishment for both innocent and guilty. A man had been killed by one of the group of toughs called locally the M'Mahon Gang, and against the charge of murder that of manslaughter had been set up in defence; and manslaughter might mean jail for a year or two or no jail at all. Any evidence which justified the charge of murder would mean not jail, but the rope in due course; for this was not Montana or Idaho, where the law's delays outlasted even the memory of the crime committed.

The court-room of Askatoon was crowded to suffocation, for the M'Mahons were detested, and the murdered man had a good reputation in the district. Besides, a widow and three children mourned their loss, and the widow was in court. Also Crozier's evidence was expected to be sensational, and to prove the swivel on which the fate of the accused man would hang. Among those on the inside it was also known that the clever but dissipated Augustus Burlingame,

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the counsel for the prisoner, had a grudge against Crozier,—no one quite knew why except Kitty Tynan and her mother,—and that cross-examination would be pressed mercilessly when Crozier entered the witness-box. As Burlingame came into the court-room he said to the Young Doctor—he was always spoken of as the Young Doctor in Askatoon, though he had been there a good many years and he was no longer as young as he looked—who was also called as a witness, "We'll know more about Mr. J. G. Kerry when this trial is over than will suit his book." It did not occur to Augustus Burlingame that in Crozier, who knew why he had fled the house of the showy but virtuous Mrs. Tynan, he might find a witness of a mental and moral calibre with baffling qualities and some gift of *riposte*.

Crozier entered the witness-box at a stage when excitement was at fever height; for the M'Mahon Gang had given evidence which every one believed to be perjured; and the widow of the slain man was weeping bitterly in her seat because of noxious falsehoods sworn against her honest husband.

There was certainly someting credible and prepossessing in the look of Crozier. He might be this or that, but he carried no evil or vice of character in his face. He was in his grave mood this summer afternoon. There he stood with his long face and the very heavy eyebrows, clean-shaven, hard-bitten, as though by wind and weather, composed and forceful, the mole on his chin a kind of challenge to the vertical dimple in his cheek, his high forehead more benevolent than intellectual, his brown hair faintly sprinkled with grey and a bit unmanageable, his fathomless eyes shining.

"No man ought to have such eyes," remarked a

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woman present to the Young Doctor, who abstractedly nodded assent, for, like Malachi Deely and John Sibley, he himself had a theory about Crozier; and he had a fear of what the savage enmity of the morally diseased Burlingame might do. He had made up his mind that so intense a scrupulousness as Crozier had shown since coming to Askatoon had behind it not only character, but the rigidity of a set purpose; and that view was supported by the stern economy of Crozier's daily life, broken only by sudden bursts of generosity for those in need.

In the box Crozier kept his eye on the crown attorney, who prosecuted, and on the judge. He appeared not to see any one in the court-room, though Kitty Tynan had so placed herself that he must see her if he looked at the audience at all. Kitty thought him magnificent as he told his story with a simple parsimony but a careful choice of words which made every syllable poignant with effect. She liked him in his grave mood even better than when he was aflame with an internal fire of his own creation, when he was almost wildly vivid with life.

"He's two men," she had often said to herself; and she said it now as she looked at him in the witness-box, measuring out his words and measuring off at the same time the span of a murderer's life; for when the crown attorney said to the judge that he had concluded his examination there was no one in the room —not even the graceless Burlingame—who did not think the prisoner guilty.

"That is all," the crown attorney said to Crozier as he sank into his chair, greatly pleased with one of the best witnesses who had ever been through his hands—lucid, concentrated, exact, knowing just where

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he was going and reaching his goal without meandering. Crozier was about to step down when Burlingame rose.

"I wish to ask a few questions," he said.

Crozier bowed and turned, again grasping the rail of the witness-box with one hand, while with an air of cogitation and suspense he stroked his chin with the long fingers of the other hand.

"What is your name?" asked Burlingame in a tone a little louder than he had used hitherto in the trial, indeed even louder than lawyers generally use when they want to bully a witness. In this case it was as though he wished to summon the attention of the court.

For a second Crozier's fingers caught his chin almost spasmodically. The real meaning of the question, what lay behind it, flashed to his mind. He saw in lightning illumination the course Burlingame meant to pursue. For a moment his heart seemed to stand still, and he turned slightly pale, but the blue of his eyes took on a new steely look—a look also of striking watchfulness, as of an animal conscious of its danger, yet conscious too of its power when at bay.

"What is your name?" Burlingame asked again in a somewhat louder tone, and turned to look at the jury, as if bidding them note the hesitation of the witness; though, indeed, the waiting was so slight that none but a trickster like Burlingame would have taken advantage of it, and only then when there was much behind.

For a moment longer Crozier remained silent, getting strength, as it were, and saying to himself, "What does he know?" and then, with a composed look of inquiry at the judge, who appeared to take no notice,

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he said: "I have already, in evidence, given my name to the court."

"Witness, what is your name?" again almost shouted the lawyer, with a note of indignation in his voice, as though here was a dangerous fellow committing a misdemeanour in their very presence. He spread out his hands to the jury, as though bidding them observe, if they would, this witness hesitating in answer to a simple, primary question—a witness who had just sworn a man's life away!

"What is your name?"

"James Gathorne Kerry, as I have already given it to the court," was the calm reply.

"Where do you live?"

"In Askatoon, as I have already said in evidence; and if it is necessary to give my domicile, I live at the house of Mrs. Tyndall Tynan, Pearl Street—as you know so well."

The tone in which he uttered the last few words was such that even the judge pricked up his ears.

A look of hatred came into the decadent but able lawyer's face.

"Where do you live when you are at home?"

"Mrs. Tynan's house is the only home I have at present."

He was outwitting the pursuer so far, but it only gained him time, as he knew; and he knew also that no suggestive hint concerning the episode at Mrs. Tynan's, when Burlingame was asked to leave her house, would be of any avail now.

"Where were you born?"

"In Ireland."

"What part of Ireland?"

"County Kerry."

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"What place—what town or city or village in County Kerry?"

"In neither."

"What house, then—what estate?" Burlingame was more than nettled; and he sharpened his sword.

"The estate of Castlegarry."

"What was your name in Ireland?"

In the short silence that followed, the quick-drawn breath of many excited and some agitated people could be heard. Among the latter were Mrs. Tynan and her daughter and Malachi Deely; among those who held their breath in suspence were John Sibley, Studd Bradley the financier, and the Young Doctor. The swish of a skirt seemed ridiculously loud in the hush, and the scratching of the judge's quill pen was noisily irritating.

"My name in Ireland was James Shiel Gathorne Crozier, commonly called Shiel Crozier," came the even reply from the witness-box.

"James Shiel Gathorne Crozier in Ireland, but James Gathorne Kerry here!" Burlingame turned to the jury significantly. "What other name have you been known by in or out of Ireland?" he added sharply to Crozier.

"No other name so far as I know."

"No other name so far as you know," repeated the lawyer in a sarcastic tone intended to impress the court.

"Who was your father?"

"John Gathorne Crozier."

"Any title?"

"He was a baronet."

"What was his business?"

"He had no profession, though he had business, of course."

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"Ah, he lived by his wits?"

"No, he was not a lawyer! I have said he had no profession. He lived on his money on his estate."

The judge waved down the laughter at Burlingame's expense.

"In official documents what was his description?" snarled Burlingame.

"'Gentleman' was his designation in official documents."

"You, then, were the son of a gentleman?" There was a hateful suggestion in the tone.

"I was."

"A legitimate son?"

Nothing in Crozier's face showed what he felt, except his eyes, and they had a look in them which might well have made his questioner shrink. He turned calmly to the judge.

"Your honour, does this bear upon the case? Must I answer this legal libertine?"

At the word *libertine*, the judge, the whole court, and the audience started; but it was presently clear the witness meant that the questioner was abusing his legal privileges, though the people present interpreted it another way, and quite rightly.

The reply of the judge was in favour of the lawyer.

"I do not quite see the full significance of the line of defence, but I think I must allow the question," was the judge's gentle and reluctant reply, for he was greatly impressed by this witness, by his transparent honesty and straightforwardness.

"Were you a legitimate son of John Gathorne Crozier and his wife?" asked Burlingame.

"Yes, a legitimate son," answered Crozier in an even voice.

"Is John Gathorne Crozier still living?"

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"I said that gentleman *was* his designation in official documents. I supposed that would convey the fact that he was not living, but I see you do not quickly grasp a point."

Burlingame was stung by the laughter in the court and ventured a *riposte*.

"But is once a gentleman always a gentleman an infallible rule?"

"I suppose not; I did not mean to convey that; but once a rogue always a bad lawyer holds good in every country," was Crozier's comment in a low, quiet voice which stirred and amused the audience again.

"I must ask counsel to put questions which have some relevance even to his own line of defence," remarked the judge sternly. "This is not a corner grocery."

Burlingame bowed. He had had a facer, but he had also shown the witness to have been living under an assumed name. That was a good start. He hoped to add to the discredit. He had absolutely no knowledge of Crozier's origin and past; but he was in a position to find it out if Crozier told the truth on oath, and he was sure he would.

"Where was your domicile in the old country?" Burlingame asked.

"In County Kerry—with a flat in London."

"An estate in County Kerry?"

"A house and two thousand acres."

"Is it your property still?"

"It is not."

"You sold it?"

"No."

"If you did not sell, how is it that you do not own it?"

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"It was sold for me—in spite of me."

The judge smiled, the people smiled, the jury smiled. Truly, though a life-history was being exposed with incredible slowness—"like pulling teeth," as the Young Doctor said—it was being touched off with laughter.

"You were in debt?"

"Quite."

"How did you get into debt?"

"By spending more than my income."

If Askatoon had been proud of its legal talent in the past it had now reason for revising its opinion. Burlingame was frittering away the effect of his inquiry by elaboration of details. What he gained by the main startling fact he lost in the details by which the witness scored. He asked another main question.

"Why did you leave Ireland?"

"To make money."

"You couldn't do it there?"

"They were too many for me over there, so I thought I'd come here," slyly answered Crozier, and with a grave face; at which the solemn scene of a prisoner being tried for his life was shaken by a broad smiling, which in some cases became laughter haughtily suppressed by the court attendant.

"Have you made money here?"

"A little—with expectations."

"What was your income in Ireland?"

"It began with three thousand pounds——"

"Fifteen thousand dollars about?"

"About that—about a lawyer's fee for one whisper to a client less than that. It began with that and ended with nothing."

"Then you escaped?"

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"From creditors, lawyers, and other such? No, I found you here."

The judge intervened again almost harshly on the laughter of the court, with the remark that a man was being tried for his life; that ribaldry was out of place; and that, unless the course pursued by the counsel was to discredit the reliability of the character of the witness, the examination was in excess of the privilege of counsel.

"Your honour has rightly apprehended what my purpose is," Burlingame said deprecatingly. He then turned to Crozier again, and his voice rose as it did when he began the examination. It was as though he was starting all over again.

"What was it compelled" (he was boldly venturing) "you to leave Ireland at last? What was the incident which drove you out from the land where you were born—from being the owner of two thousand acres"—

"Partly bog," interposed Crozier.

"—From being the owner of two thousand acres to becoming a kind of head-groom on a ranch? What was the cause of your flight?"

"Flight! I came in one of the steamers of the Company for which your firm are the agents. Eleven days it took to come from Glasgow to Quebec."

Again the court rippled, again the attendant intervened.

Burlingame was nonplussed this time, but he gathered himself together.

"What was the process of law which forced you to leave your own land?"

"None at all."

"What were your debts when you left?"

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"None at all."

"How much was the last debt you paid?"

"Two thousand five hundred pounds."

"What was its nature?"

"It was a debt of honour—do you understand?"

The subtle challenge of the voice, the sarcasm, was not lost. Again there was a struggle on the part of the audience not to laugh outright, and so be driven from the court as had been threatened.

The judge interposed again with the remark, not very severe in tone, that the witness was not in the box to ask questions, but to answer them. At the same time he must remind counsel that the examination must discontinue unless something more relevant immediately appeared in the evidence.

There was silence again for a moment, and even Crozier himself seemed to steel himself for a question he felt was coming.

"Are you married or single?" asked Burlingame, and he did not need to raise his voice to summon the interest of the court.

"I was married."

One person in the audience nearly cried out. It was Kitty Tynan. She had never allowed herself to think of that, but even if she had, what difference could it make whether he was married or single, since he was out of her star?

"Are you not married now?"

"I do not know."

"You mean you do not know if you have been divorced?"

"No."

"You mean your wife is dead?"

"No."

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"What do you mean? That you do not know whether your wife is living or dead?"

"Quite so."

"Have you heard from her since you saw her last?"

"I had one letter."

Kitty Tynan thought of the unopened letter in a woman's handwriting in the green baize desk in her mother's house.

"No more?"

"No more."

"Are we to understand that you do not know whether your wife is living or dead?"

"I have no information that she is dead."

"Why did you leave her?"

"I have not said that I left her. Primarily I left Ireland."

"Assuming that she is alive, your wife will not live with you?"

"Ah, what information have you to that effect?"

The judge informed Crozier that he must not ask questions of counsel.

"Why is she not with you here?"

"As you said, I am only picking up a living here, and even the passage by your own second-class steamship line is expensive."

The judge suppressed a smile. He greatly liked the witness.

"Do you deny that you parted from your wife in anger?"

"When I am asked that question I will try to answer it. Meanwhile, I do not deny what has not been put before me in the usual way."

Here the judge sternly rebuked the counsel, who ventured upon one last question.

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"Have you any children?"

"None."

"Has your brother, who inherited, any children?"

"None that I know of."

"Are you the heir-presumptive to the baronetcy?"

"I am."

"Yet your wife will not live with you?"

"Call Mrs. Crozier as a witness and see. Meanwhile, I am not upon my trial."

He turned to the judge, who promptly called upon Burlingame to conclude his examination.

Burlingame asked two questions more.

"Why did you change your name when you came here?"

"I wanted to obliterate myself."

"I put it to you, that what you want is to avoid the outraged law of your own country."

"No—I want to avoid the outrageous lawyers of yours."

Again there was a pause in the proceedings, and on a protest from the crown attorney the judge put an end to the cross-examination with the solemn reminder that a man was being tried for his life, and that the present proceedings were a lamentable reflection on the levity of human nature—in Askatoon. Turning with friendly scrutiny to Crozier, he said:

"In the early stage of his examination the witness informed the court that he had made a heavy loss through a debt of honour immediately before leaving England. Will he say in what way he incurred the obligation? Are we to assume that it was through gambling—card-playing, or other games of chance?"

"Through backing the wrong horse," was Crozier's instant reply.

"That phrase is often applied to mining or other

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unreal flights for fortune," said the judge, with a dry smile.

"This was a real horse on a real flight to the winning-post," added Crozier, with a quirk at the corner of his mouth.

"Honest contest with man or horse is no crime, but it is tragedy to stake all on the contest and lose," was the judge's grave and pedagogic comment. "We shall now hear from the counsel for defence his reason for conducting his cross-examination on such unusual lines. Latitude of this kind is only permissible if it opens up any weakness in the case against the prisoner."

The judge thus did Burlingame a good turn as well as Crozier, by creating an atmosphere of gravity, even of tragedy, in which Burlingame could make his speech in defence of the prisoner.

Burlingame started hesitatingly, got into his stride, assembled the points of his defence with the skill of which he really was capable. He made a strong appeal for acquittal, but if not acquittal, then a verdict of manslaughter. He showed that the only real evidence which could convict his man of murder was that of the witness Crozier. If he had been content to discredit evidence of the witness by an adroit but guarded misuse of the facts he had brought out regarding Crozier's past, to emphasise the fact that he was living under an assumed name and that his *bona fides* was doubtful, he might have impressed the jury to some slight degree. He could not, however, control the malice he felt, and he was smarting from Crozier's retorts. He had a vanity easily lacerated, and he was now too savage to abate the ferocity of his forensic attack. He sat down, however, with a sure sense of failure. Every orator knows when he is

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beating the air, even when his audience is quiet and apparently attentive.

The crown attorney was a man of the serenest method and of cold, unforensic logic. He had a deadly precision of speech, a very remarkable memory, and a great power of organising and assembling his facts. There was little left of Burlingame's appeal when he sat down. He declared that to discredit Crozier's evidence because he chose to use another name than his own, because he was parted from his wife, because he left England practically penniless to earn an honest living—no one had shown it was not—was the last resort of legal desperation. It was an indefensible thing to endeavour to create prejudice against a man because of his own evidence given with great frankness. Not one single word of evidence had the defence brought to discredit Crozier, save by Crozier's own word of mouth; and if Crozier had cared to commit perjury, the defence could not have proved him guilty of it. Even if Crozier had not told the truth as it was, counsel for the defence would have found it impossible to convict him of falsehood. But even if Crozier was a perjurer, justice demanded that his evidence should be weighed as truth from its own inherent probability and supported by surrounding facts. In a long experience he had never seen animus against a witness so recklessly exhibited as by counsel in this case.

The judge was not quite so severe in his summing up, but he did say of Crozier that his direct replies to Burlingame's questions, intended to prejudice him in the eyes of the community into which he had come a stranger, bore undoubted evidence of truth; for if he had chosen to say what might have saved him from the suspicions, ill or well founded, of his present fel-

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low-citizens, he might have done so with impunity, save for the reproach of his own conscience. On the whole, the judge summed up powerfully against the prisoner Logan, with the result that the jury were not out for more than a half-hour. Their verdict was, guilty of murder.

In the scene which followed, Crozier dropped his head into his hand and sat immovable as the judge put on the black cap and delivered sentence. When the prisoner left the dock, and the crowd began to disperse, satisfied that justice had been done—save in that small circle where the M'Mahons were supreme—Crozier rose with other witnesses to leave. As he looked ahead of him the first face he saw was that of Kitty Tynan, and something in it startled him. Where had he seen that look before? Yes, he remembered. It was when he was twenty-one and had been sent away to Algiers because he was falling in love with a farmer's daughter. As he drove down a lane with his father towards the railway station, those long years ago, he had seen the girl's face looking at him from the window of a labourer's cottage at the cross-roads; and its stupefied desolation haunted him for many years, even after the girl had married and gone to live in Scotland—that place of torment for an Irish soul.

The look in Kitty Tynan's face reminded him of that farmer's lass in his boyhood's history. He was to blame then—was he to blame now? Certainly not consciously, not by any intended word or act. Now he met her eyes and smiled at her, not gaily, not gravely, but with a kind of whimsical helplessness; for she was the first to remind him that he was leaving the court-room in a different position (if not a different man) from that in which he entered it. He had en-

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tered the court-room as James Gathorne Kerry, and he was leaving it as Shiel Crozier; and somehow James Cathorne Kerry had always been to himself a different man from Shiel Crozier, with different views, different feelings, if not different characteristics.

He saw faces turned to him, a few with intense curiosity, fewer still with a little furtiveness, some with amusement, and many with unmistakable approval; for one thing was clear, if his own evidence was correct: he was the son of a baronet, he was heir-presumptive to a baronetcy, and he had scored off Augustus Burlingame in a way which delighted a naturally humorous people. He noted, however, that the nod which Studd Bradley, the financier, gave him had in it an enigmatic something which puzzled him. Surely Bradley could not be prejudiced against him because of the evidence he had given. There was nothing criminal in living under an assumed name, which, anyhow, was his own name in three-fourths of it, and in the other part was the name of the county where he was born.

"Divils me own, I told you he was up among the dukes," said Malachi Deely to John Sibley as they came out. "And he's from me own county, and I know the name well enough; an' a damn good name it is. The bulls of Castlegarry was famous in the south of Ireland."

"I've a warm spot for him. I was right, you see. Backing horses ruined him," said Sibley in reply; and he looked at Crozier admiringly.

There is the communion of saints, but nearer and dearer is the communion of sinners; for a common danger is their bond, and that is even more than a common hope.

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CHAPTER IV

"STRENGTH SHALL BE GIVEN THEE"

On the evening of the day of the trial, Mrs. Tynan, having fixed the new blind to the window of Shiel Crozier's room, which was on the ground-floor front, was lowering and raising it to see if it worked properly, when out in the moonlit street she saw a wagon approaching her house surrounded and followed by obviously excited men. Once before she had seen just such a group nearing her door. That was when her husband was brought home to die in her arms. She had a sudden conviction, as, holding the blind in her hand, she looked out into the night, that again tragedy was to cross her threshold. Standing for an instant under the fascination of terror, she recovered herself with a shiver, and, stepping down from the chair where she had been fixing the blind, with the instinct of real woman, she ran to the bed of the room where she was, and made it ready. Why did she feel that it was Shiel Crozier's bed which should be made ready? Or did she not feel it? Was it only a dazed, automatic act, not connected with the person who was to lie in the bed? Was she then a fatalist? Were trouble and sorrow so much her portion that to her mind this tragedy, whatever it was, must touch the man nearest to her—and certainly Shiel Crozier was far nearer than Jesse Bulrush. Quite apart from wealth or postion, personality plays a part more powerful than

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all else in the eyes of every woman who has a soul which has substance enough to exist at all. Such men as Crozier have compensations for "whate'er they lack." It never occurred to Mrs. Tynan to go to Jesse Bulrush's room or the room of middle-aged, comely Nurse Egan. She did the instinctive thing, as did the woman who sent a man a rope as a gift, on the ground that the fortune in his hand said that he was born not to be drowned.

Mrs. Tynan's instinct was right. By the time she had put the bed into shape, got a bowl of water ready, lighted a lamp, and drawn the bed out from the wall, there was a knocking at the door. In a moment she had opened it, and was faced by John Sibley, whose hat was off as though he were in the presence of death. This gave her a shock, and her eyes strove painfully to see the figure which was being borne feet foremost over her threshold.

"It's Mr. Crozier?" she asked.

"He was shot coming home here—by the M'Mahon mob, I guess," returned Sibley huskily.

"Is—is he dead?" she asked tremblingly.

"No. Hurt bad."

"The kindest man—it'd break Kitty's heart—and mine," she added hastily, for she might be misunderstood; and John Sibley had shown signs of interest in her daughter.

"Where's the Young Doctor?" she asked, catching sight of Crozier's face as they laid him on the bed.

"He's done the first aid, and he's off getting what's needed for the operation. He'll be here in a minute or so," said a banker who, a few days before, had refused Crozier credit.

"Gently, gently—don't do it that way," said Mrs.

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Tynan in sharp reproof as they began to take off Crozier's clothes.

"Are you going to stay while we do it?" asked a maker of mineral waters, who whined at the prayer meetings of a soul saved and roared at his employees like a soul damned.

"Oh, don't be a fool!" was the impatient reply. "I've a grown-up girl and I've had a husband. Don't pull at his vest like that. Go away. You don't know how. I've had experience—my husband . . . There, wait till I cut it away with the scissors. Cover him with the quilt. Now, then, catch hold of his trousers under the quilt, and draw them off slowly. . . . There you are—and nothing to shock the modesty of a grown-up woman or any other when a life's at stake. What does the Young Doctor say?"

"Hush! He's coming to," interposed the banker.

It was as though the quiet that followed the removal of his clothes and the touch of Mrs. Tynan's hand on his head had called Crozier back from unconsciousness.

The first face he saw was that of the banker. In spite of the loss of blood and his pitiable condition, a whimsical expression came to his eyes. "Lucky for you you didn't lend me the money," he said feebly.

The banker shook his head. "I'm not thinking of that, Mr. Crozier. God knows, I'm not!"

Crozier caught sight of Mrs. Tynan. "It's hard on you to have me brought here," he murmured as she took his hand.

"Not so hard as if they hadn't," she replied. "That's what a home's for—not just a place for eating and drinking and sleeping."

"It wasn't part of the bargain," he said weakly.

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"It was my part of the bargain."

"Here's Kitty," said the maker of mineral waters, as there was the swish of a skirt at the door.

"Who are you calling 'Kitty'?" asked the girl indignantly, as they motioned her back from the bedside. "There's too many people here," she added abruptly to her mother. "We can take care of him" —she nodded towards the bed. "We don't want any help except—except from John Sibley, if he will stay, and you too," she added to the banker.

She had not yet looked at the figure on the bed. She felt she could not do so while all these people were in the room. She needed time to adjust herself to the situation. It was as though she was the authority in the household and took control even of her mother. Mrs. Tynan understood. She had a great belief in her daughter and admired her cleverness, and she was always ready to be ruled by her; it was like being "bossed" by the man she had lost.

"Yes, you'd all better go," Mrs. Tynan said. "He wants all the air he can get, and I can't make things ready with all of you in the room. Go outdoors for a while, anyway. It's summer and you'll not take cold! The Young Doctor has work to do, and my girl and I and these two will help him plenty." She motioned towards the banker and the gambling farmer.

In a moment the room was cleared of all save the four and Crozier, who knew that upon the coming operation depended his life. He had been conscious when the Young Doctor said this was so, and he was thinking, as he lay there watching these two women out of his nearly closed eyes, that he would like to be back in Ireland at Castlegarry with the girl he had married and had left without a good-bye near five

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years gone. If he had to die he would like to die at home; and that could not be.

Kitty had the courage to turn towards him now. As she caught sight of his face for the first time—she had so far kept her head turned away—she became very pale. Then, suddenly, she gathered herself together. Going over to the bed, she took the limp hand lying on the coverlet.

"Courage, soldier," she said in the colloquialism her father often used, and she smiled at Crozier a great-hearted, helpful smile.

"You are a brick of bricks, Kitty Tynan," he whispered, and smiled.

"Here comes the Young Doctor," said Mrs. Tynan as the door opened unceremoniously.

"Well, I have to make an excursion," Crozier said, "and I mayn't come back. If I don't, *au revoir*, Kitty."

"You are coming back all right," she answered firmly. "It'll take more than a horse-thief's bullet to kill you. You've got to come back. You're as tough as nails. And I'll hold your hand all through it—yes, I will!" she added to the Young Doctor, who had patted her shoulder and told her to go to another room.

"I'm going to help you, doctor-man, if you please," she said, as he turned to the box of instruments which his assistant held.

"There's another—one of my colleagues—coming I hope," the Young Doctor replied.

"That's all right, but I am staying to see Mr. Crozier through. I said I'd hold his hand, and I'm going to do it," she added firmly.

"Very well; put on a big apron, and see that you go through with us if you start. No nonsense."

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"There'll be no nonsense from me," she answered quietly.

"I want the bed in the middle of the room," the Young Doctor said, and the others gently moved it.

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CHAPTER V

A STORY TO BE TOLD

A GREAT surgeon said a few years ago that he was never nervous when performing an operation, though there was sometimes a moment when every resource of character, skill, and brain came into play. That was when, having diagnosed correctly and operated, a new and unexpected seat of trouble and peril was exposed, and instant action had to be taken. The great man naturally rose to the situation and dealt with it coolly; but he paid the price afterwards in his sleep when, night after night, he performed the operation over and over again with the same strain on his subconscious self.

So it was with Kitty Tynan in her small way. She had insisted on being allowed to help at the operation, and the Young Doctor, who had a good knowledge of life and knew the stuff in her, consented; and so far as the operation was concerned she justified his faith in her. When the banker had to leave the room at the sight of the carnage, she remained, and she and John Sibley were as cool as the Young Doctor and his fellow-anatomist, till it was all over, and Shiel Crozier was started again on a safe journey back to health. Then a thing, which would have been amusing if it had not been so deeply human, happened. She and John Sibley went out of the house together into the moonlit night, and the reaction seized them both at the same moment. She gave a gulp and burst into tears, and he, though as tall as Crozier, also broke

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down, and they sat on the stump of a tree together, her hand in his, and cried like two children.

"Never since I was a little runt—did I—never cried in thirty years—and here I am—leaking like a pail!"

Thus spoke John Sibley in gasps and squeezing Kitty's hand all the time unconsciously, but spontaneously, and as part of what he felt. He would not, however, have dared to hold her hand on any other occasion, while always wanting to hold it, and wanting her also to share his not wholly reputed, though far from precarious, existence. He had never got so far as to tell her that; but if she had understanding she would realise after to-night what he had in his mind.

She, feeling her arm thrill with the magnetism of his very vital palm, had her turn at explanation. "I wouldn't have broke down myself—it was all your fault," she said. "I saw it—yes—in your face as we left the house. I'm so glad it's over safe—no one belonging to him here, and not knowing if he'd wake up alive or not—I just was swamped."

He took up the misty excuse and explanation. "I had a feeling for him from the start; and then that Logan Trial to-day, and the way he talked out straight, and told the truth to shame the devil—it's what does a man good! And going bung over a horse-race—that's what got me too, where I was young and tender. Swatted that Burlingame every time—one eye, two eyes all black, teeth out, nose flattened—called him an 'outrageous lawyer'—my, that last clip was a good one! You bet he's a sport—Crozier."

Kitty nodded eagerly while still wiping her red eyes. "He made the judge smile—I saw it, not ten minutes before his honour put on the black cap. You couldn't have believed it, if you hadn't seen it——

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Here, let go my hand," she added, suddenly conscious of the enormity John Sibley was committing by squeezing it now.

It is perfectly true that she did not quite realise that he had taken her hand—that *he* had taken her hand. She was conscious in a nice, sympathetic way that her hand had been taken, but it was lost in the abstraction of her emotion.

"Oh, here, let it go quick!" she added—"and not because mother's coming, either," she added as the door opened and her mother came out—not to spy, not to reproach her daughter for sitting with a man in the moonlight at ten o'clock at night, but—good, practical soul—to bring them each a cup of beef-tea.

"Here, you two," she said as she hurried to them. "You need something after that business in there, and there isn't time to get supper ready. It's as good for you as supper, anyway. I don't believe in underfeeding. Nothing's too good to swallow."

She watched them sip the tea slowly like two schoolchildren.

"And when you've drunk it you must go right to bed, Kitty," she added presently. "You've had your own way, and you saw the thing through; but there's always a reaction, and you'll pay for it. It wasn't fit work for a girl of your age; but I'm proud of your nerve, and I'm glad you showed the Young Doctor what you can do. You've got your father's brains and my grit," she added with a sigh of satisfaction. "Come along—bed now, Kitty. If you get too tired you'll have bad dreams."

Perhaps she was too tired. In any case she had dreams. Just as the great surgeon performed his

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operation over and over in his sleep, so Kitty Tynan, through long hours that night, and for many nights afterwards, saw the swift knives, helped to staunch the blood, held the basin, disinfected the instruments which had made an attack on the man of men in her eyes, and saw the wound stitched up—the last act of the business before the Young Doctor turned to her and said, "You'll do wherever you're put in life, Miss Kitty Tynan. You're a great girl. And now get some fresh air and forget all about it."

Forget all about it! So, the Young Doctor knew what happened after a terrific experience like that! In truth, he knew only too well. Great surgeons do surgery only and have innumerable operations to give them skill; but a country physician and surgeon must be a sane being to keep his nerve when called on to use the knife, and he must have a more than usual gift for such business. That is what the Young Doctor had; but he knew it was not easy to forget those scenes in which man carved the body of fellow-man, laying bare the very vitals of existence, seeing "the wheels go round."

It haunted Kitty Tynan in the night-time, and perhaps it was that which toned down a little the colour of her face—the kind of difference of colouring there is between natural gold and 14-carat. But in the daytime she was quite happy, and though there was haunting, it was Shiel Crozier who, first helpless, then convalescent, was haunted by her presence. It gave him pleasure, but it was a pleasure which brought pain. He was not so blind that he had not caught at her romance, in which he was the central figure—a romance which had not vanished since the day he declared in the court-room that he was married, or had

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been married. Kitty's eyes told their own story, and it made him uneasy and remorseful. Yet he could not remember when, even for an instant, he had played with her. She had always seemed part of a simple family life for which he and Jesse Bulrush and her mother and the nurse—Nurse Egan—were responsible. What a blessing Nurse Egan had been! Otherwise, all the nursing would have been performed by Kitty and her mother, and it might well have broken them down, for they were determined to nurse him themselves.

When, however, Nurse Egan came back, two days after the operation was performed, they included her in the responsibility, as one of the family; and as she had no other important case on at the time, fortunately she could give Crozier almost undivided attention. She had been at first disposed to keep Kitty out of the sick-chamber, as no place for a girl, but she soon abandoned that position, for Kitty was not the girl ever to think of impropriety. She was primitive and she had rather a before-the-flood nature, but she had not the faintest vulgar strain in her. Her mind was essentially pure; nothing material in her had been awakened.

Her greatest joy was to do the many things for the patient which a nurse must do—prepare his food, give him drink, adjust his pillows, bathe his face and hands, take his temperature; and on his part he tried hard to disguise from her the apprehension he felt, and to avoid any hint by word or look that he saw anything save the actions of a kind heart. True, her views as to what was proper and improper might possibly be on a different plane from his own. For instance, he had seen girls of her station in the West kiss young men freely—men whom they had no thought

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of marrying; and that was not the custom of his own class in his home-country.

As he got well slowly, and life opened out before him again, he felt he had to pursue a new course, and in that course he must take account of Kitty Tynan, though he could not decide how. He had a deep confidence in the Young Doctor, in his judgment and his character; and it was almost inevitable that he should tell his life-story to the man whose skill had saved him from death in a strange land, with all undone he wanted to do ere he returned to a land which was not strange.

The thing happened, as such things do happen, in a quite natural way one day when he and the Young Doctor were discussing the probable verdict against the man who had shot him—the trial was to come on soon, and once again Augustus Burlingame was to be counsel for the defence, and once again Crozier would have to appear in a witness-box.

"I think you ought to know, Crozier, that, in view of the trial, Burlingame has written to a firm of lawyers in Kerry to get full information about your past," the Young Doctor said.

Crozier gave one of those little jerks of the head characteristic of him and said: "Why, of course; I knew he would do that after I gave my evidence in the Logan Trial." He raised himself on his elbow. "I owe you a great deal," he added feelingly, "and I can't repay you in cash or kindness for what you have done; but it is due you to tell you my whole story, and that is what I propose to do now."

"If you think——"

"I do think; and also I want both Mrs. Tynan and her daughter to hear my story. Better, truer friends

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a man could not have; and I want them to know the worst and the best there is, if there is any best. They and you have trusted me, been too good to me, and what I said at the trial is not enough. I want to do what I've never done before. I want to tell everything. It will do me good; and perhaps as I tell it I'll see myself and everything else in a truer light than I've yet seen it all."

"You are sure you want Mrs. Tynan and her daughter to hear?"

"Absolutely sure."

"They are not in your rank in life, you know."

"They are my friends, and I owe them more than I can say. There is nothing they cannot or should not hear. I can say that at least."

"Shall I ask them to come?"

"Yes. Give me a swig of water first. It won't be easy, but——"

He held out his hand, and the Young Doctor grasped it.

Suddenly the latter said: "You are sure you will not be sorry? That it is not a mood of the moment due to physical weakness?"

"Quite sure. I determined on it the day I was shot—and before I was shot."

"All right." The Young Doctor disappeared.

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CHAPTER VI

"HERE ENDETH THE FIRST LESSON"

THE stillness of a summer's day in Prairie Land has all the characteristics of music. That is not so paradoxical as it seems. The effect of some music is to produce a divine quiescence of the senses, a suspension of motion and aggressive life; to reduce existence to mere pulsation. It was this kind of feeling which pervaded that region of sentient being when Shiel Crozier told his story. The sounds that sprinkled the general stillness were in themselves sleepy notes of the pervasive music of somnolent nature—the sough of the pine at the door, the murmur of insect life, the low, thudding beat of the steam-thresher out of sight hard by, the purring of the cat in the arms of Kitty Tynan as, with fascinated eyes, she listened to a man tell the tale of a life as distant from that which she lived as she was from Eve.

She felt more awed than curious as the tale went on; it even seemed to her she was listening to a theme beyond her sphere, like some shameless eavesdropper at the curtains of a secret ceremonial. Once or twice she looked at her mother and at the Young Doctor, as though to reassure herself that she was not a vulgar intruder. It was far more impressive to her, and to the Young Doctor too, than the scene at the Logan Trial when a man was sentenced to death. It was strangely magnetic, this tale of a man's existence;

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and the clock which sounded so loud on the mantelpiece, as it mechanically ticked off the time, seemed only part of some mysterious machinery of life. Once a dove swept down upon the window-sill, and, peering in, filled one of the pauses in the recital with its deep contralto note, and then fled like a small blue cloud into the wide and—as it seemed—everlasting peace beyond the doorway.

There was nothing at all between themselves and the far sky-line save little clumps of trees here and there, little clusters of buildings and houses—no visible animal life. Everything conspired to give a dignity in keeping with the drama of failure being unfolded in the commonplace home of the widow Tynan. Yet the home too had its dignity. The engineer father had had tastes, and he had insisted on plain, unfigured curtains and wallpaper and carpets, when carpets were used; and though his wife had at first protested against the unfigured carpets as more difficult to keep clean and as showing the dirt too easily, she had come to like the one-colour scheme, and in that respect her home had an individuality rare in her surroundings.

That was why Kitty Tynan had always a good background; for what her bright colouring would have been in the midst of gaudy, cheap chintzes and "Axminsters," such as abounded in Askatoon, is better left to the imagination. It was not, therefore, in sordid, mean, or incongruous surroundings that Crozier told his tale; as would no doubt have been arranged by a dramatist, if he had had the making and the setting of the story; and if it were not a true tale told just as it happened.

Perhaps the tale was the more impressive because

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of Crozier's deep baritone voice, capable, as it was, of much modulation, yet, except when he was excited, having a slight monotone like the note of a violin with the mute upon the strings.

This was his tale:—

"Well, to begin with, I was born at Castlegarry, in Kerry—you know the main facts from what I said in court. As a boy I wasn't so bad a sort. I had one peculiarity. I always wanted 'to have something on,' as John Sibley would say. No matter what it was, I must have something on it. And I was very lucky—worse luck!"

They all laughed at the bull. "I feel at home at once," murmured the Young Doctor, for he had come from near Enniskillen years agone, and there is not so much difference between Enniskillen and Kerry when it comes to Irish bulls.

"Worse luck, it was," continued Crozier, "because it made me confident of always winning. It's hard to say how early I began to believe I could see things that were going to happen. By the hour I used to shake the dice on the billiard-table at Castlegarry, trying to see with my eyes shut the numbers about to come up. Of course now and then I saw the right numbers; and it deepened the conviction that if I cultivated the gift I'd be able to be right nearly every time. When I went to a horse-race I used to fasten my mind on the signal, and tried to see beforehand the number of the winner. Again sometimes I was very right indeed, and that deepened my confidence in myself. I was always at it. I'd try and guess—try and *see*—the number of the hymn which was on the paper in the vicar's hand before he gave it out, and I would bet with myself on it. I would bet with myself or with

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anybody available on any conceivable thing—the minutes late a train would be; the pints of milk a cow would give; the people who would be at a hunt breakfast; the babies that would be christened on a Sunday; the number of eyes in a peck of raw potatoes. I was out against the universe. But it wasn't serious at all—just a boy's mania—till one day my father met me in London when I came down from Oxford, and took me to Thwaite's Club in St. James's Street. There was the thing that finished me. I was twenty-one, and restless-minded, and with eyes wide open.

"Well, he took me to Thwaite's where I was to become a member, and after a little while he left me to go and have a long pow-wow with the committee—he was a member of it. He told me to make myself at home, and I did so as soon as his back was turned. Almost the first thing with which I became sociable was a book which, at my first sight of it, had a fascination for me. The binding was very old, and the leather was worn, as you will see the leather of a pocket-book, till it looks and feels like a nice soap. That book brought me here."

He paused, and in the silence the Young Doctor pushed a glass of milk and brandy towards him. He sipped the contents. The others were in a state of tension. Kitty Tynan's eyes were fixed on him as though hypnotised, and the Young Doctor was scarcely less interested; while the widow knitted harder and faster than she had ever done, and she could knit very fast indeed.

"It was the betting-book of Thwaite's, and it dated back almost to the time of the conquest of Quebec. Great men dead and gone long ago—near a hundred and fifty years ago—had put down their bets in the

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book, for Thwaite's was then what it is now, the highest and best sporting club in the world."

Kitty Tynan's face had a curious look, for there was a club in Askatoon, and it was said that all the "sports" assembled there. She had no idea what Thwaite's Club in St. James's Street would look like; but that did not matter. She supposed it must be as big as the Askatoon Court House at least.

"Bets—bets—bets by men whose names were in every history, and the names of their sons and grandsons and great-grandsons; and all betting on the oddest things as well as the most natural things in the world. Some of the bets made were as mad as the bets I made myself. Oh! ridiculous, some of them were; and then again bets on things that stirred the world to the centre, from the loss of America to the beheading of Louis XVI.

"It was strange enough to see the half-dozen lines of a bet by a marquis whose great-grandson bet on the Franco-German War; that the Government which imposed the tea-tax in America would be out of power within six months; or that the French Canadians would join the colonists in what is now the United States if they revolted. This would be cheek-by-jowl with a bet that an heir would be born to one new-married pair before another pair. The very last bet made on the day I opened the book was that Queen Victoria would make Lord Salisbury a duke, that a certain gentleman known as S. S. could find his own door in St. James's Square, blindfold, from the club, and that Corsair would win the Derby.

"For two long hours I sat forgetful of everything around me, while I read that record—to me the most interesting the world could show. Every line was part

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of the history of the country, a part of the history of many lives, and it was all part of the ritual of the temple of the great god Chance. I was fascinated, lost in a land of wonders. Men came and went, but silently. At last there entered a gentleman whose picture I had so often seen in the papers—a man as well known in the sporting world as was Chamberlain in the political world. He was dressed spectacularly, but his face oozed good-nature, though his eyes were like bright bits of coal. He bred horses, he raced this, he backed that, he laid against the other; he was one of the greatest plungers, one of the biggest figures on the turf. He had been a kind of god to me—a god in a grey frock-coat, with a grey top-hat and field-glasses slung over his shoulder; or in a hunting-suit of the most picturesque kind—great pockets in a well-fitting coat, splendid striped waistcoat. Well, there, I only mention this because it played so big a part in bringing me to Askatoon.

"He came up to the table where I sat in the room with the beautiful Adam's fireplace and the ceiling like an architrave of Valhalla, and said, 'Do you mind —for one minute?' and he reached out a hand for the book.

"I made way for him, and I suppose admiration showed in my eyes, because as he hastily wrote—what a generous scrawl it was!—he said to me, 'Haven't we met somewhere before? I seem to remember your face.'

"Great gentleman, I thought, because it was certain he knew he had never seen me before, and I was overcome by the reflection that he wished to be civil in that way to me. 'It's my father's face you remember, I should think,' I answered. 'He is a member

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here. I am only a visitor. I haven't been elected yet.' 'Ah, we must see to that!' he said with a smile, and laid a hand on my shoulder as though he'd known me many a year—and I only twenty-one. 'Who is your father?' he asked. When I told him he nodded. 'Yes, yes, I know him—Crozier of Castlegarry; but I knew his father far better, though he was so much older than me, and indeed your grandfather also. Look—in this book is the first bet I ever made here after my election to the club, and it was made with your grandfather. There's no age in the kingdom of sport, dear lad,' he added, laughing—'neither age nor sex nor position nor place. It's the one democratic thing in the modern world. It's a republic inside this old monarchy of ours. Look, here it is, my first bet with your grandfather—and I'm only sixty now!' He smoothed the page with his hand in a manner such as I have seen a dean do with his sermon-paper in a cathedral puplit. 'Here it is, thirty-six years ago.' He read the bet aloud. It was on the Derby, he himself having bet that the Prince of Wale's horse would win. 'Your grandfather, dear lad,' he repeated, 'but you'll find no bets of mine with your father. He didn't inherit that strain, but your grandfather and your great-grandfather had it—sportsmen both, afraid of nothing, with big minds, great eyes for seeing, and a sense for a winner almost uncanny. Have you got it by any chance? Yes, yes, by George and by John, I see you have; you are your grandfather to a hair! His portrait is here in the club—in the next room. Have a look at it. He was only forty when it was done, and you're very like him; the cut of the jib is there.' He took my hand. 'Good-bye, dear lad,' he said; 'we'll meet—yes, we'll meet often enough if you are

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like your grandfather. And I'll always like to see you,' he added generously.

"'I always wanted to meet you,' I answered. 'I've cut your pictures out of the papers to keep them—at Eton and Oxford.' He laughed in great good-humour and pride. 'So so, so so, and I am a hero then, with one follower! Well, well, dear lad, I don't often go wrong, or anyhow I'm oftener right than wrong, and you might do worse than follow me—but no, I don't want that responsibility. Go on your own—go on your own.'

"A minute more and he was gone with a wave of the hand, and in excitement I picked up the betting-book. It almost took my breath away. He had staked a thousand pounds that the favourite of the Derby would not win the race, and that one of three outsiders would. As I sat overpowered by the magnitude of the bet the door opened, and he appeared with another man, not one with whose face I was then familiar, though as a duke and owner of great possessions, he was familiar to society. 'I've put it down,' he said. 'Sign it, if it's all in order.' This the duke did, after apologizing for disturbing me. He looked at me keenly as he turned away. 'Not the most elevating literature in the library,' he said, smiling ironically. 'If you haven't got a taste for it beyond control, don't cultivate it.' He nodded kindly, and left; and again, till my father came and found me, I buried myself in that book of fate—to me. I found many entries in my grandfather's name, but not one in my father's name. I have an idea that when a vice or virtue skips one generation, it appears with increased violence or persistence in the next, for, passing over my father into my defenceless breast, the

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spirit of sport went mad in me—or almost so. No miser ever had a more cheerful and happy hour than I had as I read the betting-book at Thwaites'.

"I became a member of Thwaite's soon after I left Oxford. As some men go to the Temple, some to the Stock Exchange, some to Parliament, I went to Thwaite's. It was the centre of my interest, and I took chambers in Park Place, St. James's Street, a few steps away. Here I met again constantly the great sportsman who had noticed me so kindly, and I became his follower, his disciple. I had started with him on a wave of prejudice in his favour; because that day when I read in the betting-book what he had staked against the favourite, I laid all the cash and credit I could get with his outsiders and against the favourite, and I won five hundred pounds. What he won—to my youthful eyes—was fabulous. There's no use saying what you think—you kind friends, who've always done something in life—that I was a good-for-nothing creature to give myself up to the turf, to horses and jockeys, and the janissaries of sport. You must remember that for generations my family had run on a very narrow margin of succession, there seldom, if ever, being more than two born in any generation of the family, so that there was always enough for the younger son or daughter; and to take up a profession was not necessary for livelihood. If my mother, who was an intellectual and able woman, had lived, it's hard to tell what I should have become; for steered aright, given true ideas of what life should mean to a man, I might have become ambitious and forged ahead in one direction or another. But there it was, she died when I was ten, and there was no one to mould me. At Eton, at Oxford—well, they are not prepara-

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tory schools to the business of life. And when at twenty-four I inherited the fortune my mother left me, I had only one idea: to live the life of a sporting gentleman. I had a name as a cricketer——"

"Ah—I remember, Crozier of Lammis!" interjected the Young Doctor involuntarily. "I'm a north of Ireland man, but I remember——"

"Yes, Lammis," the sick man went on. "Castlegarry was my father's place, but my mother left me Lammis. When I got control of it, and of the securities she left, I felt my oats, as they say; and I wasn't long in making a show of courage, not to say rashness, in following my leader. He gave me luck for a time, indeed so great that I could even breed horses of my own. But the luck went against him at last, and then, of course, against me; and I began to feel that suction which, as it draws the cash out of your pocket, the credit out of your bank, seems to draw also the whole internal economy out of your body—a ghastly, empty, collapsing thing."

Mrs. Tynan gave a great sigh. She had once put two hundred dollars in a mine—on paper—and it ended in a lawsuit; and on the verdict in the lawsuit depended the two hundred dollars and more. When she read a fatal telegram to her saying that all was lost, she had had that empty, collapsing feeling.

Pausing for a moment, in which he sipped some milk, Crozier then continued: "At last my leader died, and the see-saw of fortune began for me; and a good deal of my sound timber was sawed into logs and made into lumber to build some one else's fortune. When things were balancing pretty easily, I married. It wasn't a sordid business to restore my fortunes—I'll say that for myself; but it wasn't the thing to do,

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for I wasn't secure in my position. I might go on the rocks; but was there ever a gambler who didn't believe that he'd pull it off in a big way next time, and that the turn of the wheel against him was only to tame his spirit? Was there ever a gambler or sportsman of my class who didn't talk about the 'law of chances,' on the basis that if red, as it were, came up three times, black stood a fair chance of coming up the fourth time? A silly enough conclusion; for on the law of chances there's no reason why red shouldn't come up three hundred times; and so I found that your run of bad luck may be so long that you cannot have a chance to recover, and are out of it before the wheel turns in your favour. I oughn't to have married."

His voice had changed in tone, his look become most grave, there was something very like reverence in his face, and deprecating submission in his eyes. His fingers fussed with the rug that covered his knees.

"God help the man that's afraid of his own wife!" remarked the Young Doctor to himself, not erroneously reading the expression of Crozier's face and the tone of his voice. "There's nothing so unnerving."

"No, I oughtn't to have done it," Crozier went on. "But I will say again it wasn't a sordid marriage, though she had great expectations, but not immediate; and she was a girl of great character. She was able and brilliant and splendid and far-seeing, and she knew her own mind, and was radiantly handsome."

Kitty Tynan almost sniffed. Through a whole fortnight she had, with a courage and a right-mindedness quite remarkable, fought her infatuation for this man, and as she fought she had imagined a hundred times what his wife was like. She had pictured to herself a gossamer kind of woman, delicate, and in

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contour like one of the fashion-plate figures she saw in the picture-papers. She had imagined her with a wide, drooping hat, with a soft, clinging gown, and a bodice like a great white handkerchief crossed on her breast, holding a basket of flowers, while a King Charles spaniel gambolled at her feet.

This was what she had imagined with a kind of awe; but the few words Crozier had said of her gave the impression of a Juno, commanding, exacting, bullying, sailing on with this man of men in her wake, who was afraid of stepping on her train. Was it strange she should think that? She was only a simple prairie girl who drew her own comparisons according to her kind and from what she knew of life. So she imagined Crozier's wife to have been a sort of Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, who swept up the dust of the universe with her skirts, and gave no chance at all to the children of nature like Kitty, who wore skirts scarcely lower than their ankles. She almost sniffed, and she became angry, too, that a man like Crozier, who had faced the offensive Augustus Burlingame in the witness-box as he did; who took the bullet of the assasin with such courage; who broke a horse like a Mexican; who could ride like a leech on a filly's flank, should crumple up at the thought of a woman who, anyhow, couldn't be taller than Crozier himself was, and hadn't a hand like a piece of steel and the skin of an antelope. It was enough to make a cat laugh, or a woman cry with rage.

"Able and brilliant and splendid and far-seeing, and radiantly handsome!" There the picture was of a high, haughty, and overbearing woman; in velvet, or brocade, or poplin—yes, something stiff and overbearing, like grey poplin. Kitty looked at herself

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suddenly in the mirror—the half-length mirror on the opposite wall—and she felt her hands clench and her bosom beat hard under her pretty and inexpensive calico frock, a thing for Chloe, not for Juno.

She was very angry with Crozier, for it was absurd, that look of deprecating homage, that "Hush—she—is—coming" in his eyes. What a fool a man was where a woman was concerned! Here she had been fighting herself for a fortnight to conquer a useless passion for her man of all the world, fit to command an array of giants; and she saw him now almost breathless as he spoke of a great wild-cat of a woman who ought to be by his side now. What sort of a woman was she anyhow, who could let him go into exile as he had done and live apart from her all these years, while he "slogged away"—that was the Western phrase which came to her mind—to pull himself level with things again? Her feet shuffled unevenly on the floor, and it would have been a joy to shake the invalid there with the rapt look in his face. Unable to bear the situation without some demonstration, she got to her feet and caught up the glass of brandy and milk with a little exclamation.

"Here," she said, holding the glass to his lips, "here, courage, soldier. You don't need to be afraid at a six-thousand-mile range."

The Young Doctor started, for she had said what was in his own mind, but what he would not have said for a thousand dollars. It was fortunate that Crozier was scarcely conscious of what she was saying. His mind was far away. Yet, when she took the glass from him again, he touched her arm.

"Nothing is good enough for your friends, is it?" he said gratefully.

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"That wouldn't be an excuse for not getting them the best there was at hand," she answered with a little laugh, and at least the Young Doctor read the meaning of her words.

Presently Crozier, with a sigh, continued: "If I had done what my wife wanted from the start, I shouldn't have been here. I'd have saved what was left of a fortune, and I'd have had a home of my own."

"Is she earning her living too?" asked Kitty softly, and Crozier did not notice the irony under the question.

"She has a home of her own," answered Crozier almost sharply. "Just before the worst came to the worst she inherited her fortune—plenty of it, as I got near the end of mine. One thing after another had gone. I was mortgaged up to the eyes. I knew the money-lenders from Newry to Jewry and Jewry to Jerusalem. Then it was I promised her I'd bet no more—never again: I'd give up the turf; I'd try and start again. Down in my soul I knew I couldn't start again—not just then. But I wanted to please her. She was remarkable in her way; she had one of the most imposing intelligences I have ever known. So I promised. I promised I'd bet no more."

The Young Doctor caught Kitty Tynan's eyes by accident, and there was the same look of understanding in both. They both knew that here was the real tragedy of Crozier's life. If he had had less reverence for his wife, less of that obvious prostration of soul, he probably would never have come to Askatoon.

"I broke my promise," he murmured. "It was a horse—well, never mind. I was as sure of Flamingo as that the sun would rise by day and set by night. It

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was a certainty; and it *was* a certainty. The horse could win, it would win; I had it from a sure source. My judgment was right, too. I bet heavily on Flamingo, intending it for my last fling, and to save what I had left, to get back what I had lost. I could get big odds on him. It was good enough. From what I knew, it was like picking up a gold-mine. And I was right, right as could be. There was no chance about it. It was being out where the rain fell to get wet. It was just being present when they called the roll of the good people that God wished to be kind to. It meant so much to me. I couldn't bear to have nothing and my wife to have all. I simply couldn't stand——"

Again the Young Doctor met the glance of Kitty Tynan, and there was, once more, a new and sudden look of comprehension in the eyes of both. They began to see light where their man was concerned.

After a moment of struggle to control himself, Crozier proceeded: "It didn't seem like betting. Besides, I had planned it, that when I showed her what I had won, she would shut her eyes to the broken promise, and I'd make another, and keep it ever after. I put on all the cash there was to put on, all I could raise on what was left of my property."

He paused as though to get strength to continue. Then a look of intense excitement suddenly possessed him, and there passed over him a wave of feeling which transformed him. The naturally grave mediæval face became fired, the eyes blazed, the skin shone, the mouth almost trembled with agitation. He was the dreamer, the enthusiast, the fanatic almost, with that look which the pioneer, the discoverer, the adventurer has when he sees the end of his quest.

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His voice rose, vibrated. "It was a day to make you thank Heaven the world was made. Such days only come once in a while in England, but when they do come, what price Arcady or Askatoon! Never had there been so big a Derby. Everybody had the fever of the place at its worst. I was happy. I meant to pouch my winnings and go straight to my wife and say, '*Peccavi*,' and I should hear her say to me, 'Go and sin no more.' Yes, I was happy. The sky, the green of the fields, the still, home-like, comforting trees, the mass of glorious colour, the hundreds of horses that weren't running and the scores that were to run, sleek and long, and made like shining silk and steel, it all was like heaven on earth to me—a horse-race heaven on earth. There you have the state of my mind in those days, the kind of man I was."

Sitting up, he gazed straight in front of him as though he saw Epsom Downs before his eyes; as though he was watching the fateful race that bore him down. He was terribly, exhaustingly alive. Something possessed him, and he possesed his hearers.

"It was just as I said and knew—my horse, Flamingo, stretched away from the rest at Tattenham Corner and came sailing away home two lengths ahead. It was a sight to last a lifetime, and that was what I meant it to be for me. The race was all Flamingo's own, and the mob was going wild, when all of a sudden a woman—the widow of a racing-man gone suddenly mad—rushed out in front of the horse, snatched at its bridle with a shrill cry and down she came, and down Flamingo and the jockey came, a mêlée of crushed humanity. And that was how I lost my last two thousand five hundred pounds, as I said at the Logan Trial."

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"Oh! Oh!" said Kitty Tynan, her face aflame, her eyes like topaz suns, her hands wringing. "Oh, that was—oh, poor Flamingo!" she added.

A strange smile shot into Crozier's face, and the dark passion of reminiscence fled from his eyes. "Yes, you are right, little friend," he said. "That was the real tragedy after all. There was the horse doing his best, his most beautiful best, as though he knew so much depended on him, stretching himself with the last ounce of energy he could summon, feeling the psalm of success in his heart—yes, he knows, he knows what he has done, none so well!—and out comes a black, hateful thing against him, and down he goes, his game over, his course run. I felt exactly as you do, and I felt that before everything else when it happened. Then I felt for myself afterwards, and I felt it hard, as you can think."

The break went from his voice, but it rang with reflective, remembered misery. "I was ruined. One thing was clear to me. I would not live on my wife's money. I would not eat and drink what her money bought. No, I would not live on my wife. Her brother, a good enough, impulsive lad, with a tongue of his own and too small to thresh, came to me in London the night of the race. He said his sister had been in the country—down at Epsom—and that she bitterly resented my having broken my promise and lost all I had. He said he had never seen her so angry, and he gave me a letter from her. On her return to town she had been obliged to go away at once to see her sister taken suddenly ill. He added, with an unfeeling jibe, that he wouldn't like the reading of the letter himself. If he hadn't been such a chipmunk of a fellow I'd have wrung his neck. I put the letter—

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her letter—in my pocket, and next day gave my lawyer full instructions and a power of attorney. Then I went straight to Glasgow, took steamer for Canada, and here I am. That was near five years ago."

"And the letter from your wife?" asked Kitty Tynan demurely and slyly.

The Young Doctor looked at Crozier, surprised at her temerity, but Crozier only smiled gently. "It is in the desk there. Bring it to me, please," he said.

In a moment Kitty was beside him with the letter. He took it, turned it over, examined it carefully as though seeing it for the first time, and laid it on his knee.

"I have never opened it," he said. "There it is, just as it was handed to me."

"You don't know what is in it?" asked Kitty in a shocked voice. "Why, it may be that——"

"Oh, yes, I know what is in it!" he replied. "Her brother's confidences were enough. I didn't want to read it. I can imagine it all."

"It's pretty cowardly," remarked Kitty.

"No, I think not. It would only hurt, and the hurting could do no good. I can *hear* what it says, and I don't want to see it."

He held the letter up to his ear whimsically. Then he handed it back to her, and she replaced it in the desk.

"So, there it is, and there it is," he sighed. "You have got my story, and it's bad enough, but you can see it's not what Burlingame suggested."

"Burlingame—but Burlingame's beneath notice," rejoined Kitty. "Isn't he, mother?"

Mrs. Tynan nodded. Then, as though with sudden impulse, Kitty came forward to Crozier and

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leaned over him. The look of a mother was in her eyes. Somehow she seemed to herself twenty years older than this man with the heart of a boy, who was afraid of his own wife.

"It's time for your beef-tea, and when you've had it you must get your sleep," she said, with a hovering solicitude.

"I'd like to give him a threshing first, if you don't mind," said the Young Doctor to her.

"Please let a little good advice satisfy you," Crozier remarked ruefully. "It will seem like old times," he added rather bitterly.

"You are too young to have had 'old times,'" said Kitty with gentle scorn. "I'll like you better when you are older," she added.

"Naughty jade," exclaimed the Young Doctor, "you ought to be more respectful to those older than yourself."

"Oh, grandpapa!" she retorted.

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CHAPTER VII

A WOMAN'S WAY TO KNOWLEDGE

THE harvest was over. The grain was cut, the prairie no longer waved like a golden sea, but the smoke of the incense of sacrifice still rose in innumerable spirals in the circle of the eye. The ground appeared bare and ill-treated, like a sheep first shorn; but yet nothing could take away from it the look of plenty, even as the fat sides of the shorn sheep invite the satisfied eye of the expert. The land now, all stubble, still looked good for anything. If bare, it did not seem starved. It was naked and unshaven; it was stripped like a boxer for the rubbing-down after the fight. Not so refined and suggestive and luxurious as when it was clothed with the coat of ripe corn in the ear, it still showed the fibre of its being to no disadvantage. And overhead the joy of the prairie grew apace.

September saw the vast prairie spaces around Askatoon shorn and shrivelled of its glory of ripened grain, but with a new life come into the air—sweet, stinging, vibrant life, which had the suggestion of nature recreating her vitality, inflaming herself with Edenic strength, a battery charging itself, to charge the world in turn with force and energy. Morning gave pure elation, as though all created being must strive; noon was the pulse of existence at the top of its activity; evening was glamorous; and all the lower sky was spread with those colours which Titian stole from the joyous horizon that filled his eyes. There was in that evening light, somehow, just a touch of

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pensiveness—the triste delicacy of heliotrope, harbinger of the Indian summer soon to come, when the air would make all sensitive souls turn to the past and forget that to-morrow was all in all.

Sensitive souls, however, are not so many as to crowd each other unduly in this world, and they were not more numerous in Askatoon than elsewhere. Not everybody was taking joy of sunrises and losing himself in the delicate contentment of the sunset. There were many who took it all without thought, who absorbed it unconsciously, and got something from it; though there were many others who got nothing out of it at all, save the health and comfort brought by a precious climate whose solicitous friend is the sun. These heeded it little, even though a good number of them came from the damp islands lying between the north Atlantic and the German Ocean. From Erin and England and the land o' cakes they came, had a few days of staring bright-eyed happy incredulity as to the permanency of such conditions, and then settled down to take it as it was,—endless days of sunshine and stirring vivacious air—as though they had always known it and had it.

There were exceptions, and these had joy in what they saw and felt according to the measure of their temperament. Shiel Crozier saw and felt much of it, and probably the Young Doctor saw more of it than any one; stray people here and there who take no part in this veracious tale had it in greater or less degree; fat Jesse Bulrush was so sensitive to it that he, as he himself said, "almost leaked sentimentality" and Kitty Tynan possessed it. She was pulsing with life, as a bird drunken with the air's sweetness sings itself into an abandonment of motion.

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Before Crozier came she had enjoyed existence as existence, wondering often why it was she wanted to spring up from the ground with the idea that she could fly, if she chose to try. Once when she was quite a little girl she had said to her mother, "I'm going to ile away," and her mother, puzzled, asked her what she meant. Her reply was, "It's in the hymn." Her mother persisted in asking what hymn; and was told with something like scorn that it was the hymn she herself had taught her only child—"I'll away, I'll away to the Promised Land."

Kitty had thought that "I'll away" meant some delicious motion which was to *ile*, and she had visions of something between floating and flying as being that blessed means of transportation.

As the years grew, she still wanted to "ile away" whenever the spirit of elation seized her, and it had increased greatly since Shiel Crozier came. Out of her star as he was, she still felt near to him, and as though she understood him and he comprehended her. He had almost at once become to her an admired mystery, which, however, at first she did not dare wish to solve. She had been content to be a kind of handmaiden to a generous and adored master. She knew that where he had been she could in one sense never go, and yet she wanted to be near him just the same. This was intensified after the Logan Trial and the shooting of the man who somehow seemed to have made her live in a new way.

As long ago as she could recall she had, in a crude, untutored way, been fond of the things that nature made beautiful; but now she seemed to see them in a new light, but not because any one had deliberately taught her. Indeed, it bored her almost to hear books

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read as Jesse Bulrush and Nurse Egan, and even her mother, read them to Crozier after his operation, to help him pass away the time. The only time she ever cared to listen—at school, though quick and clever, she had never cared for the printed page—was when, by chance, poetry or verses were read or recited. Then she would listen eagerly, not attracted by the words, but by the music of the lines, by the rhyme and rhythm, by the underlying feeling; and she got something out of it which had in one sense nothing to do with the verses themselves or with the conception of the poet.

Curiously enough, she most liked to hear Jesse Bulrush read. He was a born sentimentalist, and this became by no means subtly apparent to Kitty during Crozier's illness. Whenever Nurse Egan was on duty Jesse contrived to be about, and to make himself useful and ornamental too; for he was a picturesque figure, with a taste for figured waistcoats and clean linen—he always washed his own white trousers and waistcoats, and he had a taste in ties, which he made for himself out of silk bought by the yard. He was, in fact, a clean, wholsome man, with a flair for material things, as he had shown in the land proposal on which Shiel Crozier's fortunes hung, but with no gift for carrying them out, having neither constructive ability nor continuity of purpose. Yet he was an agreeable, humorous, sentimental soul, who at fifty years of age found himself "an old bach," as he called himself, in love at last with a middle-aged nurse with dark brown hair and set figure, keen, intelligent eyes, and a most cheerful, orderly, and soothing way with her.

Before Shiel Crozier was taken ill their romance be-

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gan; but it grew in volume and intensity after the trial and the shooting, when they met by the bedside of the wounded man. Jesse had been away so much in different parts of the country before then that their individual merits never had had a real chance to make permanent impression. By accident, however, his business made it necessary for him to be much in Askatoon at the moment, and it was a propitious time for the growth of the finer feelings.

It had given Jesse Bulrush real satisfaction that Kitty Tynan listened to his reading of poetry—Longfellow, Byron, Tennyson, Whyte Melville, and Adam Lindsay Gordon chiefly—with such absorbed interest. His content was the greater because his lovely nurse —he did think she was lovely, as Rubens thought his painted ladies beautiful, though their cordial, ostentatious proportions are not what Raphael regarded as the divine lines—because his lovely nurse listened to his fat, happy voice rising and falling, swelling and receding on the waves of verse; though it meant nothing to her that one who had the gift of pleasant sound was using it on her behalf.

This was not apparent to her Bulrush, though Crozier and Kitty understood. Jesse only saw in the blue-garbed, clear-visaged woman a mistress of his heart, who had all the virtues and graces and who did not talk. That, to him, was the best thing of all. She was a superb listener, and he was a prodigious talker—was it not all appropriate?

One day he went searching for Kitty at her favourite retreat, a little knoll behind and to the left of the house, where a half-dozen trees made a pleasant resting-place at a fine look-out point. He found her in her usual place, with a look almost pensive on her

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face. He did not notice that, for he was excited and elated.

"I want to read you something I've written," he said, and he drew from his pocket a paper.

"If it's another description of the timber-land you have for sale—please, not to me," she answered provokingly, for she guessed well what he held in his hand. She had seen him writing it. She had even seen some of the lines scrawled and re-scrawled on bits of paper, showing careful if not swift and skilful manufacture. One of these crumpled-up bits of paper she had in her pocket now, having recovered it that she might tease him by quoting the lines at a provoking opportunity.

"It's not that. It's some verses I've written," he said, with a wave of his hand.

"All your own?" she asked with an air of assumed innocent interest, and he did not see the frivolous gleam in her eyes, or notice the touch of aloes on her tongue.

"Yes. Yes. I've always written verses more or less—I write a good many advertisements in verse," he added cheerfully. "They are very popular. Not genius, quite, but there it is, the gift; and it has its uses in commerce as in affairs of the heart. But if you'd rather not, if it makes you tired——"

"Courage, soldier, bear your burden," she said gaily. "Mount your horse and get galloping," she added, motioning him to sit.

A moment later he was pouring out his soul through a pleasing voice, from fat lips, flanked by a high-coloured healthy cheek like a russet apple:

"Like jewels of the sky they gleam,
Your eyes of light, your eyes of fire;

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In their dark depths behold the dream
Of Life's glad hope and Love's desire.

"Above your quiet brow, endowed
With Grecian charm to crown your grace,
Your hair in one soft Titian cloud
Throws heavenly shadows on your face."

"Well, I've never had verses written to me before," Kitty remarked demurely, when he had finished and sat looking at her questioningly. "But 'dark depths' —that isn't the right thing to say of my eyes! And Titian cloud of hair—is my hair Titian? I thought Titian hair was bronzy—tawny was what Mr. Burlingame called it when he was spouting,"—her upper lip curled in contempt.

"It isn't you, and you know it," he replied jerkily.

She bridled. "Do you mean to say that you come and read to me without a word of explanation, so that I shouldn't misunderstand, verses written for another? Am I to be told now that my eyes aren't eyes of light and eyes of fire, that I haven't got a Grecian brow? Do you dare to say those verses don't fit me—except for the Titian hair and heavenly shadows? And that I've got no right to think they're meant for me? Is it so, that a man that's lived in my mother's house for years, eating at the same table with the family, and having his clothes mended free, with supper to suit him and no questions asked—is it so, that he reads me poetry, four lines at a stretch, and a rhyme every other line, and then announces it isn't for me!"

Her eyes flashed, her bosom palpitated, her hand made passionate gestures, and she really seemed a young fury let loose. For a moment he was deceived

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by her acting; he did not see the lurking grin in the depths of her eyes.

Her voice shook with assumed passion. "Because I didn't show what I felt all these years, and only exposed my real feelings when you read those verses to me, do you think any man who was a gentleman wouldn't in the circumstances say, 'These verses are for you, Kitty Tynan'? You betrayed me into showing you what I felt, and then you tell me your verses are for another girl!"

"Girl! Girl! Girl!" he burst out. "Nurse is thirty-seven—she told me so herself, and how could I tell that you—why, it's absurd! I've only thought of you always as a baby in long skirts"—she spasmodically drew her skirts down over her pretty, shapely ankles, while she kept her eyes covered with one hand —"and you've seen me makin' up to *her* ever since Crozier got the bullet. Ever since he was operated on, I've——"

"Yes, yes, that's right," she interrupted. "That's manly! Put the blame on him—him that couldn't help himself, struck by a horse-thief's bullet in the dark; him that's no more to blame for your carryings on while death was prowling about the door there——"

"Carryings on! Carryings on!" Jesse Bulrush was thoroughly excited and indignant. The little devil, to put him in a hole like this! "Carryings on! I've acted like a man all through—never anything else in your house, and it's a shame that I've got to listen to things that have never been said of me in all my life. My mother was a good, true woman, and she brought me up——"

"Yes, that's it, put it on your mother now, poor woman! who isn't here to stretch out her hand and

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stop you from playing a double game with two girls so placed they couldn't help themselves—just doing kind acts for a sick man." Suddenly she got to her feet. "I tell you, Jesse Bulrush, that you're a man—you're a man——"

But she could keep it up no longer. She burst out laughing, and the false tears of the actress she dashed from her eyes as she added: "That you're a man after my own heart. But you can't have it, even if you are after it, and you are welcome to the thirty-seven-year-old seraph in there!" She tossed a hand towards the house.

By this time he was on his feet too, almost bursting. "Well, you wicked little rip—you Ellen Terry at twenty-two, to think you could play it up like that! Why, never on the stage was there such——!"

"It's the poetry made me do it. It inspired me," she gurgled. "I felt—why, I felt here"—she pressed her hand to her heart—"all the pangs of unrequited love—oh, go away, go back to the house and read that to her! She's in the sitting-room, and my mother's away down-town. Now's your chance, Claude Melnotte."

She put both hands on his big, panting chest and pushed him backward towards the house. "You're good enough for anybody, and if I wasn't so young and daren't leave mother till I get my wisdom-teeth cut, and till I'm thirty-seven—oh, oh, oh!" She laughed till the tears came into her eyes. "This is as good as—as a play."

"It's the best acted play I ever saw, from 'Ten Nights in a Bar-room' to 'Struck Oil,'" rejoined Jesse Bulrush, with a face still half ashamed yet beaming. "But, tell me, you heartless little woman,

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are the verses worth anything? Do you think she'll like them?"

Kitty grew suddenly serious, and a curious look he could not read deepened in her eyes. "Nurse 'll like them—of course she will," she said gently. "She'll like them because they are you. Read them to her as you read them to me, and she'll only hear your voice, and she'll think them clever and you a wonderful man, even if you are fifty and weigh a thousand pounds. It doesn't matter to a woman what a man's saying or doing, or whether he's so much cleverer than she is, if she knows that under everthing he's saying, 'I love you.' A man isn't that way, but a woman is. Now go." Again she pushed him with a small brown hand.

"Kitty Tynan, what a girl you are!" he said admiringly.

"Then be a father to me," she said teasingly.

"I can't marry both your mother and nurse."

"P'r'aps you can't marry either," she replied sarcastically, "and I know that in any case you'll never be any relative of mine by marriage. Get going," she said almost impatiently.

He turned to go, and she said after him, as he rolled away, "I'll let you hear some of my verses one day when you're more developed and can understand them."

"I'll bet they beat mine," he called back.

"You'll win your bet," she answered, and stood leaning against a tree with a curious look emerging and receding in her eyes. When he had disappeared, sitting down, she drew from her breast a slip of paper, unfolded it, and laid it on her knee. "It *is* better," she said. "It's not good poetry, of course, but it's

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truer, and it's not done according to a pattern like his. Yes, it's real, real, real, and he'll never see it—never see it now, for I've fought it all out, and I've won."

Then she slowly read the verses aloud.

"Yes, I've won," she said with determination. So many of her sex have said things just as decisively, and while yet the exhilaration of their decision was inflaming them, have done what they said they would never, never, never do. Still there was a look in the fair face which meant a new force awakened in her character.

For a long time she sat brooding, forgetful of the present and of the little comedy of elderly lovers going on inside the house. She was thinking of the way conventions hold and bind us; of the lack of freedom in the lives of all, unless they live in wild places beyond the social pale. Within the past few weeks she had had visions of such a world beyond this active and ordered civilisation, where the will and the conscience of a man or woman was the only law. She was not lawless in mind or spirit. She was only rebelling gainst a situation in which she was bound hand and foot, and could not follow her honest and exclusive desire, if she wished to do so.

Here was a man who was married, yet in a real sense who had no wife. Suppose that man cared for her, what a tragedy it would be for them to be kept apart! This man did not love her, and so there was no tragedy for both. Still all was not over yet—yes, all was "over and over and over," she said to herself as she sprang to her feet with a sharp exclamation of disgust—with herself.

Her mother was coming hurriedly towards her from

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the house. There was a quickness in her walk suggesting excitement, yet from the look in her face it was plain that the news she brought was not painful.

"He told me you were here, and——"

"Who told you I was here?"

"Mr. Bulrush."

"So it's all settled," she said, with a little quirk of her shoulders.

"Yes, he's asked her, and they're going to be married. It's enough to make you die laughing to see the two middle-aged doves cooing in there."

"I thought perhaps it would be you. He said he would like to be a father to me."

"That would prevent me if nothing else would," answered the widow of Tyndall Tynan. "A stepfather to an unmarried girl, both eyeing each other for a chance to find fault—if you please, no thank you!"

"That means you won't get married till I'm out of the way?" asked Kitty, with a look which was as much touched with myrrh as with mirth.

"It means I wouldn't get married till you are married, anyway," was the complacent answer.

"Is there any one special that——"

"Don't talk nonsense. Since your father died I've only thought of his child and mine, and I've not looked where I might. Instead, I've done my best to prove that two women could live and succeed without a man to earn for them; though of course without the pension it couldn't have been done in the style we've done it. We've got our place!"

There is a dignity attached to a pension which has an influence quite its own, and in the most primitive communities it has an aristocratic character which commands general respect. In Askatoon people gave

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Mrs. Tynan a better place socially because of her pension than they would have done if she had earned double the money which the pension brought her.

"Everybody has called on us," she added with reflective pride.

"Principally since Mr. Crozier came," added Kitty. "It's funny, isn't it, how he made people respect him before they knew who he was?"

"He would make Satan stand up and take off his hat, if he paid Hades a visit," said Mrs. Tynan admiringly. "Anybody'd do anything for him."

Kitty eyed her mother closely. There was a strange, far-away, brooding look in Mrs. Tynan's eyes, and she seemed for a moment lost in thought.

"You're in love with him," said Kitty sharply.

"I was, in a way," answered her mother frankly. "I was, in a way, a kind of way, till I knew he was married. But it didn't mean anything. I never thought of it except as a thing that couldn't be."

"Why couldn't it be?" asked Kitty, smothering an agitation rising in her breast.

"Because I always knew he belonged to where we didn't, and because if he was going to be in love himself, it would be with some girl like you. He's young enough for that, and it's natural he should get as his profit the years of youth that a young woman has yet to live."

"As though it was a choice between you and me, for instance!"

Mrs. Tynan started, but recovered herself. "Yes. If there had been any choosing, he'd not have hesitated a minute. He'd have taken you, of course. But he never gave either of us a thought that way."

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"I thought that till—till after he'd told us his story," replied Kitty boldly.

"What has happened since then?" asked her mother, with sudden apprehension.

"Nothing has *happened* since. I don't understand it, but it's as though he'd been asleep for a long time and was awake again."

Mrs. Tynan gravely regarded her daughter, and a look of fear came into her face. "I knew you kept thinking of him always," she said; "but you had such sense, and he never showed any feeling for you; and young girls get over things. Besides, you always showed you knew he wasn't a possibility. But since he told us that day about his being married and all, has—has he been different towards you?"

"Not a thing, not a word," was the reply; "but—but there's a difference with him in a way. I feel it when I go in the room where he is."

"You've got to stop thinking of him," insisted the elder woman querulously. "You've got to stop it at once. It's no good. It's bad for you. You've too much sense to go on caring for a man that——"

"I'm going to get married," said Kitty firmly. "I've made up my mind. If you *have* to think about one person, you should stop thinking about another; anyhow, you've got to make yourself stop. So I'm going to marry—and stop."

"Who are you going to marry, Kitty? You don't mean to say it's John Sibley!"

"P'r'aps. He keeps coming."

"That gambling and racing fellow!"

"He owns a big farm, and it pays, and he has got an interest in a mine, and——"

"I tell you, you shan't," peevishly interjected Mrs.

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Tynan. "You shan't. He's vicious. He's—oh, you shan't! I'd rather——"

"You'd rather I threw myself away—on a married man?" asked Kitty covertly.

"My God—oh, Kitty!" said the other, breaking down. "You can't mean it—oh, you can't mean that you'd——"

"I've got to work out my case in my own way," broke in Kitty calmly. "I know how I've got to do it. I have to make my own medicine—and take it. You say John Sibley is vicious. He has only got one vice."

"Isn't it enough? Gambling——"

"That isn't a vice; it's a sport. It's the same as Mr. Crozier had. Mr. Crozier did it with horses only, the other does it with cards and horses. The only vice John Sibley's got is me."

"Is you?" asked her mother bewilderedly.

"Well, when you've got an idea you can't control and it makes you its slave, it's a vice. I'm John's vice, and I'm thinking of trying to cure him of it—and cure myself too," Kitty added, folding and unfolding the paper in her hand.

"Here comes the Young Doctor," said her mother, turning towards the house. "I think you don't mean to marry Sibley, but if you do, make him give up gambling."

"I don't know that I want him to give it up," answered Kitty musingly.

A moment later she was alone with the Young Doctor.

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CHAPTER VIII

ALL ABOUT AN UNOPENED LETTER

"WHAT'S this you've been doing?" asked the Young Doctor, with a quizzical smile. "We never can tell where you'll break out."

"Kitty Tynan's measles!" she rejoined, swinging her hat by its ribbon. "Mine isn't a one-sided character, is it?"

"I know one of the sides quite well," returned the Young Doctor.

"Which, please, sir?"

The Young Doctor pretended to look wise. "The outside. I read it like a book. It fits the life in which it moves like the paper on the wall. But I'm not sure of the inside. In fact, I don't think I know that at all."

"So I couldn't call you in if my character was sick inside, could I?" she asked obliquely.

"I might have an operation, and see what's wrong with it," he answered playfully.

Suddenly she shivered. "I've had enough of operations to last me awhile," she rejoined. "I thought I could stand anything, but your operation on Mr. Crozier taught me a lesson. I'd never be a doctor's wife if I had to help him cut up human beings."

"I'll remember that," the Young Doctor replied mockingly.

"But if it would help put things on a right basis,

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I'd make a bargain that I wasn't to help do the carving," she rejoined wickedly. The Young Doctor always incited her to say daring things. They understood each other well. "So don't let that stand in the way," she added slyly.

"The man who marries you will be glad to get you without the anatomy," he returned gallantly.

"I wasn't talking of a man; I was talking of a doctor."

He threw up a hand and his eyebrows. "Isn't a doctor a man?"

"Those I've seen have been mostly fish."

"No feelings—eh?"

She looked him in the eyes, and he felt a kind of shiver go through him. "Not enough to notice. I never observed you had any," she replied. "If I saw that you had, I'd be so frightened I'd fly. I've seen pictures of an excited whale turning a boat full of men over. No, I couldn't bear to see you show any feeling."

The dark eyes of the Young Doctor suddenly took on a look which was a stranger to them. In his relations with women he was singularly impersonal, but he was a man, and he was young enough to feel the Adam stir in him. The hidden or controlled thing suddenly emerged. It was not the look which would be in his eyes if he were speaking to the woman he wanted to marry. Kitty saw it, and she did not understand it, for she had at heart a feeling that she could go to him in any trouble of life and be sure of healing. To her he seemed wonderful; but she thought of him as she would have thought of her father, as a person of authority and knowledge—that operation showed him a great man, she thought, so skilful and

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precise and splendid; and the whole countryside had such confidence in him.

She regarded him as a being apart; but for a moment, an ominous moment, he was almost one with that race of men who feed in strange pastures. She only half saw the reddish glow which came swimming into his eyes, and she did not realise it, for she did not expect to find it there. For an instant, however, he saw with new eyes that primary eloquence of woman life, the unspent splendour of youth, the warm joy of the material being, the mystery of maidenhood in all its efflorescence. It was the emergence of his own youth again, as why should it not be, since he had never married and had never dallied! But in a moment it was gone again—driven away.

"What a wicked little flirt you are!" he said, with a shake of the head. "You'll come to a bad end, if you don't change your ways."

"Perform an operation, then, if you think you know what's the matter with me," she retorted.

"Sometimes in operating for one disease we come on another, and then there's a lot of thinking to be done."

The look in her face was quizzical, yet there was a strange, elusive gravity in her eyes, an almost pathetic appealing. "If you were going to operate on me, what would it be for?" she asked more flippantly than her face showed.

"Well, it's obscure, and the symptoms are not usual, but I should strike for the cancer love," he answered, with a direct look.

She flushed and changed on the instant. "Is love a cancer?" she asked. All at once she felt sure that he read her real story, and something very like anger quickened in her.

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"Unrequited love is," he answered deliberately.

"How do you know it is unrequited?" she asked sharply.

"Well, I don't know it," he answered, dismayed by the look in her face. "But I certainly hope I'm right. I do, indeed."

"And if you were right, what would you do—as a surgeon?" she questioned, with an undertone of meaning.

"I would remove the cause of the disease."

She came close and looked him straight in the eyes. "You mean that *he* should go? You think that would cure the disease? Well, you are not going to interfere. You are not going to manœuvre anything to get him away—I know doctors' tricks. You'd say he must go away east or west to the sea for change of air to get well. That's nonsense, and it isn't necessary. You are absolutely wrong in your diagnosis—if that's what you call it. He is going to stay here. You aren't going to drive away one of our boarders and take the bread out of our mouths. Anyhow, you're wrong. You think because a girl worships a man's ability that she's in love with him. I adore your ability, but I'd as soon fall in love with a lobster—and be boiled with the lobster in a black pot. Such conceit men have!"

He was not convinced. He had a deep-seeing eye, and he saw that she was boldly trying to divert his belief or suspicion. He respected her for it. He might have said he loved her for it—with a kind of love which can be spoken of without blushing or giving cause to blush, or reason for jealousy, anger, or apprehension.

He smiled down into her gold-brown eyes, and he

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thought what a real woman she was. He felt, too, that she would tell him something that would give him further light if he spoke wisely now.

"I'd like to see some proof that you are right, if I am wrong," he answered cautiously.

"Well, I'm going to be married," she said, with an air of finality.

He waved a hand deprecatingly. "Impossible—there's no man worth it. Who is the undeserving wretch?"

"I'll tell you to-morrow," she replied. "He doesn't know yet how happy he's going to be. What did you come here for? Why did you want to see me?" she added. "You had something you were going to tell me. Hadn't you?"

"That's quite right," he replied. "It's about Crozier. This is my last visit to him professionally. He can go on now without my care. Yours will be sufficient for him. It has been all along the very best care he could have had. It did more for him than all the rest, it——"

"You don't mean that," she interrupted, with a flush and a bosom that leaped under her pretty gown. "You don't mean that I was of more use than the nurse—than the future Mrs. Jesse Bulrush?"

"I mean just that," he answered. "Nearly every sick person, every sick man, I should say, has his mascot, his ministering angel, as it were. It's a kind of obsession, and it often means life or death, whether the mascot can stand the strain of the situation. I knew an old man—down by Dingley's Flat it was, and he wanted a boy—his grand-nephew—beside him always. He was getting well, but the boy took sick and the old man died the next day. The boy had been his

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medicine. Sometimes it's a particular nurse that does the trick; but whoever it is, it's a great vital fact. Well, that's the part you played to Mr. Shiel Crozier of Lammis and Castlegarry aforetime. He owes you much."

"I am glad of that," she said softly, her eyes on the distance.

"She is in love with him in spite of what she says, remarked the Young Doctor to himself. "Well," he continued aloud, "the fact is, Crozier's almost well in a way, but his mind is in a state, and he is not going to get wholly right as things are. Since things came out in court, since he told us his whole story, he has been different. It's as though——"

She interrupted him hastily and with suppressed emotion. "Yes, yes, do you think I've not noticed that? He's been asleep in a way for five years, and now he's awake again. He is not James Gathorne Kerry now; he is James Shiel Gathorne Crozier, and —oh, you understand: he's back again where he was before—before he left *her*."

The Young Doctor nodded approvingly. "What a little brazen wonder you are! I declare you see more than——"

"Yet you won't have me?" she asked mockingly.

"You're too clever for me," he rejoined with spirit. "I'm too conceited. I must marry a girl that'd kneel to me and think me as wise as Socrates. But he's back again, as you say, and, in my view, his wife ought to be back again also."

"She ought to be *here*," was Kitty's swift reply, "though I think mighty little of her—mighty little, I can tell you. Stuckup, great tall stork of a woman, that lords it over a man as though she was a goddess.

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Wears diamonds in the middle of the day, I suppose, and cold-blooded as—as a fish."

"She ought to have married me, according to your opinion of me. You said I was a fish," remarked the Young Doctor, with a laugh.

"The whale and the catfish!"

"Heavens, what spite!" he rejoined. "Catfish—what do you know about Mrs. Crozier? You may be brutally unjust—waspishly unjust, I should say."

"Do I look like a wasp?" she asked half tearfully. She was in a strange mood.

"You look like a golden busy bee," he answered. "But tell me, how did you come to know enough about her to call her a cat?"

"Because, as you say, I was a busy golden bee," she retorted.

"That information doesn't get me much further," he answered.

"*I opened that letter*," she replied.

"'That letter'—you mean you opened the letter he showed us which he had left sealed as it came to him five years ago?" The Young Doctor's face wore a look of dismay.

"I steamed the envelope open—how else could I have done it! I steamed it open, saw what I wanted, and closed it up again."

The Young Doctor's face was pale now. This was a terrible revelation. He had a man's view of such conduct. He almost shrank from her, though she stood there as inviting and innocent a specimen of girlhood as the eye could wish to see. She did not look dishonourable.

"Do you realise what that means?" he asked in a cold, hard tone.

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"Oh, come, don't put on that look and don't talk like John the Evangelist," she retorted. "I did it, not out of curiosity, and not to do any one harm, but to do her good—his wife."

"It was dishonourable—wicked and dishonourable."

"If you talk like that, Mr. Piety, I'm off," she rejoined, and she started away.

"Wait—wait," he said, laying firm fingers on her arm. "Of course you did it for a good purpose. I know. You cared enough for him for that."

He had said the right thing, and she halted and faced him. "I cared enough to do a good deal more than that if necessary. He has been like a second father to me, and——"

Suddenly a light of humour shot into the eyes of both. Sheil Crozier as a "father" to her was too artificial not to provoke their sense of the grotesque.

"I wanted to find out his wife's address to write to her and tell her to come quick," she explained. "It was when he was at the worst. And then, too, I wanted to know the kind of woman she was before I wrote to her. So——"

"You mean to say you read that letter which he had kept unopened and unread for five long years?" The Young Doctor was certainly disturbed again.

"Every word of it," Kitty answered shamelessly, "and I'm not sorry. It was in a good cause. If he had said, 'Courage, soldier,' and opened it five years ago, it would have been good for him. Better to get things like that over."

"It was that kind of a letter, was it—a catfish letter?"

Kitty laughed a little scornfully. "Yes, just like

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that, Mr. Easily Shocked. Great, showy, purse-proud creature!"

"And you wrote to her?"

"Yes—a letter that would make her come if anything would. Talk of tact—I was as smooth as a billiard-ball. But she hasn't come."

"The day after the operation I cabled to her," said the Young Doctor.

"Then you steamed the letter open and read it too?" asked Kitty sarcastically.

"Certainly not. Ladies first—and last," was the equally sarcastic answer. "I cabled to Castlegarry, his father's place, also to Lammis that he mentioned when he told us his story. Crozier of Lammis, he was."

"Well, I wrote to the London address in the letter," added Kitty. "I don't think she'll come. I asked her to cable me, and she hasn't. I wrote such a nice letter, too. I did it for his sake."

The Young Doctor laid his hands on both her shoulders. "Kitty Tynan, the man who gets you will get what he doesn't deserve," he remarked.

"That might mean anything."

"It means that Crozier owes you more than he can guess."

Her eyes shone with a strange, soft glow. "In spite of opening the letter?"

The Young Doctor nodded, then added humorously: "That letter you wrote her—I'm not sure that my cable wouldn't have far more effect than your letter."

"Certainly not. You tried to frighten her, but I tried to coax her, to make her feel ashamed. I wrote as though I was fifty."

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The Young Doctor regarded her dubiously. "What was the sort of thing you said to her?"

"For one thing, I said that he had every comfort and attention two loving women and one fond nurse could give him; but that, of course, his legitimate wife would naturally be glad to be beside him when he passed away, and that if she made haste she might be here in time."

The Young Doctor leaned against a tree shaking with laughter.

"What are you smiling at?" Kitty asked ironically.

"Oh, she'll be sure to come—nothing will keep her away after being coaxed like that!" he said, when he could get breath.

"Laughing at me as though I was a clown in a circus!" she exclaimed. "Laughing when, as you say yourself, the man that she—the cat—wrote that fiendish letter to is in trouble."

"It was a fiendish letter, was it?" he asked, suddenly sobered again. "No, no, don't tell me," he added, with a protesting gesture. "I don't want to hear. I don't want to know. I oughtn't to know. Besides, if she comes, I don't want to be prejudiced against her. He is troubled, poor fellow."

"Of course he is. There's the big land deal—his syndicate. He's got a chance of making a fortune, and he can't do it because—but Jesse Bulrush told me in confidence, so I can't explain."

"I have an idea, a pretty good idea. Askatoon is small."

"And mean sometimes."

"Tell me what you know. Perhaps I can help him," urged the Young Doctor. "I have helped more than one good man turn a sharp corner here."

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She caught his arm. "You are as good as gold."

"You are—impossible," he replied.

They talked of Crozier's land deal and syndicate as they walked slowly towards the house. Mrs. Tynan met them at the door, a look of excitement in her face.

"A telegram for you Kitty," she said.

"For me!" exclaimed Kitty eagerly. "It's a year since I had one."

She tore open the yellow envelope. A light shot up in her face. She thrust the telegram into the Young Doctor's hands.

"She's coming; his wife's coming. She's in Quebec now. It was my letter—my letter, not your cable, that brought her," Kitty added triumphantly.

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CHAPTER IX

NIGHT SHADE AND MORNING GLORY

It was as though Crozier had been told of the coming of his wife, for when night came, on the day Kitty had received her telegram, he could not sleep. He was the sport of a consuming restlessness. His brain would not be still. He could not discharge from it the thoughts of the day and make it vacuous. It would not relax. It seized with intentness on each thing in turn, which was part of his life at the moment, and gave it an abnormal significance. In vain he tried to shake himself free of the successive obsessions which stormed down the path of the night, dragging him after them, a slave lashed to the wheels of a chariot of flame.

At last it was the land deal and syndicate on which his future depended, and the savage fate which seemed about to snatch his fortune away as it had done so often before; as it had done on the day when Flamingo went down near the post at the Derby with a madwoman dragging at the bridle. He had had a sure thing then, and it was whisked away just when it would have enabled him to pass the crisis of his life. Wife, home, the old fascinating, crowded life—they had all vanished because of that vile trick of destiny; and ever since then he had been wandering in the wilderness through years that brought no fruit of his labours. Yet here was his chance, his great chance, to get back what he had and was in the old misspent days, with new purposes in life to follow and serve;

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and it was all in cruel danger of being swept away when almost within his grasp.

If he could but achieve the big deal, he could return to wife and home, he could be master in his own house, not a dependent on his wife's bounty. That very evening Jesse Bulrush, elated by his own good fortune in capturing Cupid, had told him as sadly as was possible, while his own fortunes were, as he thought, soaring, that every avenue of credit seemed closed; that neither bank nor money-lender, trust nor loan company, would let him have the ten thousand dollars necessary for him to hold his place in the syndicate; while each of the other members of the clique had flatly and cheerfully refused, saying they were busy carrying their own loads. Crozier had commanded Jesse not to approach them, but the fat idealist had an idea that his tongue had a gift of wheedling, and he believed that he could make them "shell out," as he put it. He had failed, and he was obliged to say so, when Crozier, suspecting, brought him to book.

"They mean to crowd you out—that's their game," Bulrush had said. "They've closed up all the ways to cash or credit. They're laying to do you out of your share. Unless you put up the cash within the four days left, they'll put it through without you. They told me to tell you that."

And Crozier had not even cursed them. He said to Jesse Bulrush that it was an old game to get hold of a patent that made a fortune for a song while the patentee died in the poor-house. Yet that four days was time enough for a live man to do a "flurry of work," and he was fit enough to walk up their backs yet with hobnailed boots, as they said in Kerry when a man was out for war.

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Over and over again this hovering tragedy drove sleep from his eyes; and in the spaces between there were a hundred fleeting visions of little and big things to torture him—remembrances of incidents when debts and disasters dogged his footsteps; and behind them all, floating among the elves and gnomes of ill-luck and disappointment, was a woman's face. It was not his wife's face, not a face that belonged to the old life, but one which had been part of his daily existence for over four years. It was the first face he saw when he came back from consciousness after the operation which saved his life—the face of Kitty Tynan.

And ever since the day when he had told the story of his life this face had kept passing before his eyes with a disturbing persistence. Kitty had said to her mother and to the Young Doctor that he had seemed after he had told his story like one who had awakened; and in a sense it was startlingly true. It was as though, while he was living under an assumed name, the real James Shiel Gathorne Crozier did not exist, or was in the far background of the doings and sayings of J. G. Kerry. His wife and the past had been shadowy in a way, had been as part of a life lived out, which would return in some distant day, but was not vital to the present. Much as he had loved his wife, the violent wrench away from her had seemed almost as complete as death itself; but the resumption of his own name and the telling if his story had produced a complete psychological change in him mentally and bodily. The impersonal feeling which had marked his relations with the two women of this household, and with all women, was suddenly gone. He longed for the arms of a woman round his neck—it was five years

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since any woman's arms had been there, since he had kissed any woman's lips. Now, in the hour when his fortunes were again in the fatal balance, when he would be started again for a fair race with the wife from whom he had been so long parted, another face came between.

All at once the question Burlingame asked him, as to whether his wife was living, came to him. He had never for an instant thought of her as dead, but now a sharp and terrifying anxiety came to him. If his wife was living! *Living?* Her death had never been even a remote possibility to his mind, though the parting had had the decisiveness of death. Beneath all his shrewdness and ability he was at heart a dreamer, a romancist to whom life was an adventure in a half-real world.

It was impossible to sleep. He tossed from side to side. Once he got up in the dark and drank great draughts of water; once again, as he thought of Mona, his wife, as she was in the first days of their married life, a sudden impulse seized him. He sprang from his bed, lit a candle, went to the desk where the unopened letter lay, and took it out. With the feeling that he must destroy this record, this unread but, as he knew, ugly record of their differences, and so clear her memory of any cruelty, of any act of anger, he was about to hold it to the flame of the candle when he thought he heard a sound behind him as of the door of his room gently closing. Laying the letter down, he went to the door and opened it. There was no one stirring. Yet he had a feeling as though some one was there in the darkness. His lips framed the words, "Who is it? Is any one there?" but he did not utter them.

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A kind of awe possessed him. He was Celtic; he had been fed on the supernatural when he was a child; he had had strange, indefinable experiences or hallucinations in the days when he lived at Castlegarry, and all his life he had been a friend of the mystical. It is hard to tell what he thought as he stood there and peered into the darkness of the other room—the living-room of the house. He was in a state of trance, almost, a victim of the night. But as he closed the door softly the words of the song that Kitty Tynan had sung to him the day when he found her brushing his coat came to him and flooded his brain. The last two verses of the song kept drowning his sense of the actual, and he was swayed by the superstition of bygone ancestors:

"Whereaway goes my lad—tell me, has he gone alone?
Never harsh word did I speak, never hurt I gave;
Strong he was and beautiful; like a heron he has flown—
Hereaway, hereaway will I make my grave.

"When once more the lad I loved hereaway, hereaway,
Comes to lay his hand in mine, kiss me on the brow,
I will whisper down the wind, he will weep to hear me say—
'Whereaway, whereaway goes my lover now?'"

He went to bed again, but sleep would not come. The verses of the lament kept singing in his brain. He tossed from side to side, he sought to control himself, but it was of no avail. Suddenly he remembered the bed of boughs he had made for himself at the place where Kitty had had her meeting with the Young Doctor the previous day. Before he was shot he used to sleep in the open in the summer-time. If he could get to sleep anywhere it would be there.

Hastily dressing himself in flannel shirt and trousers,

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and dragging a blanket from the bed, he found his way to the bedroom door, went into the other room, and felt his way to the front door, which would open into the night. All at once he was conscious of another presence in the room, but the folk-song was still beating in his brain, and he reproved himself for succumbing to fantasy. Finding the front door in the dark, he opened it and stepped outside. There was no moon, but there were millions of stars in the blue vault above, and there was enough light for him to make his way to the place where he had slept "hereaway and oft."

He knew that the bed of boughs would be dry, but the night would be his, and the good, cool ground, and the soughing of the pines, and the sweet, infinitesimal and innumerable sounds of the breathing, sleeping earth. He found the place and threw himself down. Why, here were green boughs under him, not the dried remains of what he had placed there! Kitty—it was Kitty, dear, gay, joyous, various Kitty, who had done this thing, thinking that he might want to sleep in the open again after his illness. Kitty—it was she who had so thoughtfully served him; Kitty, with the instinct of strong, unselfish womanhood, with the gift of the outdoor life, with the unpurchasable gift of friendship. What a girl she was! How rich she could make the life of a man!

"Hereaway my heart was soft; when he kissed my happy eyes,
Held my hand, and laid his cheek warm against my brow,
Home I saw upon the earth, heaven stood there in the skies—
Whereaway, whereaway goes my lover now?"

How different she was, this child of the West, of Nature, from the woman he had left behind in Eng-

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land, the sophisticated, well-appointed, well-controlled girl; too well-controlled even in the first days of married life; too well-controlled for him who had the rushing impulses of a Celtic warrior of olden days. Delicate, refined, perfectly poised, and Kitty beside her like a sunflower to a sprig of heliotrope! Mona—Kitty, the two names, the two who, so far, had touched his life, each in her own way, as none others had done, they floated before his eyes till sight and feeling grew dim. With a last effort he strove to eject Kitty from his thoughts, for there was the wife he had won in the race of life, and he must stand by her, play the game, ride honestly, even in exile from her, run straight, even with that unopened, bitter, upbraiding letter in the——

He fell asleep, and soon and slowly and ever so dimly the opal light of the prairie dawn crept shyly over the landscape. With it came stealing the figure of a girl towards the group of trees where lay the man of Lammis on the bed of green boughs which she had renewed for him. She had followed him from the dark room, where she had waited near him through the night—near him, to be near him for the last time; alone with him and the kind, holy night before the morrow came which belonged to the other woman, who had written to him as she never could have written to any man in whose arms she ever had lain. And the pity and the tragedy of it was that he loved his wife—the catfish wife. The sharp, pitiless instinct of love told her that the stirring in his veins which had come of late to him, which beat higher, even poignantly, when she was near him now, was only the reflection of what he felt for his wife. She knew the unmerciful truth, but it only deepened what she felt

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for him, yet what she must put away from herself after to-morrow. Those verses she wrote—they were to show that she had conquered herself. Yet, but a few hours after, here she was kneeling outside his door at night, here she was pursuing him to the place where he slept. The coming of the other woman—she knew well that she was *something* to this man of men—had roused in her all she had felt, had intensified it.

She trembled, but she drew near, accompanied by the heavenly odours of the freshened herbs and foliage and the cool tenderness of the river close by. In her white dress and loosened hair she was like some spirit of a new-born world finding her way to the place she must call home. It was all so dim, so like clouded silver, the trees and the grass and the bushes and the night. Noiselessly she stole over the grass and into the shadows of the trees where he lay. Again and again she paused. What would she do if he was awake and saw her? She did not know. The moment must take care of itself. She longed to find him sleeping.

It was so. The hazy light showed his face upward to the skies, his breast rising and falling in a heavy, luxurious sleep.

She drew nearer and nearer till she was kneeling beside him. His face was warm with colour even in the night air, warmer than she had ever seen it. One hand lay across his chest and one was thrown back over his head with the abandon of perfect rest. All the anxiety and restlessness which had tortured him had fled, and his manhood showed bold and serene in the brightening dusk.

A sob almost broke from her as she gazed her fill, then slowly she leaned over and softly pressed her lips to his—the first time that ever in love they had

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been given to any man. She had the impulse to throw her arms round him, but she mastered herself. He stirred, but he did not wake. His lips moved as she withdrew hers.

"My darling!" he said in the quick, broken way of the dreamer.

She rose swiftly and fled away among the trees towards the house.

What he had said in his sleep—was it in reality the words of unconsciousness, or was it subconscious knowledge?—they kept ringing in her ears.

"My darling!" he had said when she kissed him. There was a light of joy in her eyes now, though she felt that the words were meant for another. Yet it was her kiss, her own kiss, which had made him say it. If—but with happy eyes she stole to her room.

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CHAPTER X

"S. O. S."

At breakfast next morning Kitty did not appear. Had it been possible she would have fled into the far prairie and set up a lonely tabernacle there; for with the day came a reaction from the courage possessing her the night before and in the opal wakening of the dawn. When broad daylight came she felt as though her bones were water and her body a wisp of straw. She could not bear to meet Shiel Crozier's eyes, and thus it was she had an early breakfast on the plea that she had ironing to do. She was not, however, prepared to see Jesse Bulrush drive up with a buggy after breakfast and take Crozier away. When she did see them at the gate the impulse came to cry out to Crozier; what to say she did not know, but still to cry out. The cry on her lips was that which she had seen in the newspaper the day before, the cry of the shipwrecked seafarers, the signal of the wireless telegraphy, "S. O. S."—the piteous call, "Save Our Souls!" It sprang to her lips, but it got no farther except in an unconscious whisper. On the instant she felt so weak and shaken and lonely that she wanted to lean upon some one stronger than herself; as she used to lean against her father, while he sat with one arm round her studying his railway problems. She had been self-sufficient enough all her life,—"an independent little bird of freedom," as Crozier had called her; but she was like a boat tossed on mountainous waves now.

"S. O. S.!—Save Our Souls!"

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As though she really had made this poignant call Crozier turned round in the buggy where he sat with Jesse Bulrush, pale but erect; and, with a strange instinct, he looked straight to where she was. When he saw her his face flushed, he could not have told why. Was it that there had passed to him in his sleep the subconscious knowledge of the kiss which Kitty had given him; and, after all, had he said "My darling" to her and not to the wife far away across the seas, as he thought? A strange feeling, as of secret intimacy, never felt before where Kitty was concerned, passed through him now, and he was suddenly conscious that things were not as they had ever been; that the old impersonal comradeship had vanished. It disturbed, it almost shocked him. Whereupon he made a valiant effort to recover the old ground, to get out of the new atmosphere into the old, cheering air.

"Come and say good-bye, won't you?" he called to her.

"S. O. S.—S. O. S.—S. O. S.!" was the cry in her heart, but she called back to him from her lips, "I can't. I'm too busy. Come back soon, soldier."

With a wave of the hand he was gone. "Not a care in the world she has," Crozier said to Jesse Bulrush. "She's the sunniest creature Heaven ever made."

"Too skittish for me," responded the other with a sidelong look, for he had caught a note in Crozier's voice which gave him a sudden suspicion.

"You want the kind you can drive with an oat-straw and a chirp—eh, my friend?"

"Well, I've got what I want," was the reply. "Neither of us 'll kick over the traces."

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"You are a lucky man," replied Crozier. "You've got a remarkably big prize in the lottery. She is a fine woman, is Nurse Egan, and I owe her a great deal. I only hope things turn out so well that I can give her a good fat wedding-present. But I shan't be able to do anything that's close to my heart if I can't get the cash for my share in the syndicate."

"Courage, soldier, as Kitty Tynan says," responded Jesse Bulrush cheerily. "You never know your luck. The cash is waiting for you somewhere, and it'll turn up, be sure of that."

"I'm not sure of that. I can see as plain as your nose how Bradley and his clique have blocked me everywhere from getting credit, and I'd give five years of my life to beat them in their dirty game. If I fail to get it at Aspen Vale I'm done. But I'll have a try, a good big try. How far exactly is it? I've never gone by this trail."

Bulrush shook his head reprovingly. "It's too long a journey for you to take after your knock-out. You're not fit to travel yet. I don't like it a bit. Lydia said this morning it was a crime against yourself, going off like this, and——"

"*Lydia?*—oh yes, *pardonnez-moi, m'sieu'!* I did not know her name was Lydia."

"I didn't either till after we were engaged."

Crozier stared in blank amazement. "You didn't know her name till after you were engaged? What did you call her before that?"

"Why, I called her Nurse." answered the fat lover. "We all called her that, and it sounded comfortable and homelike and good for every day. It had a sort of York-shilling confidence, and your life was in her hands—a first-class you-and-me kind of feeling."

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"Why don't you stick to it, then?"

"She doesn't want it. She says it sounds so old, and that I'd be calling her 'mother' next."

"And won't you?" asked Crozier slyly.

"Everything in season," beamed Jesse, and he shone, and was at once happy and composed.

Crozier relapsed into silence, for he was thinking that the lost years had been barren of children. He turned to look at the home they had left. It was some distance away now, but he could see Kitty still at the corner of the house with a small harvest of laundered linen in her hand.

"She made that fresh bed of boughs for me—ah, but I had a good sleep last night!" he added aloud. "I feel fit for the fight before me." He drew himself up and began to nod here and there to people who greeted him.

In the house behind them at that moment Kitty was saying to her mother, "Where is he going, mother?"

"To Aspen Vale," was the reply. "If you'd been at breakfast you'd have heard. He'll be gone two days, perhaps three."

Three days! She regretted now that she had not said to herself, "Courage, soldier," and gone to say good-bye to him when he called to her. Perhaps she would not see him again till after the other woman—till after the wife—came. Then—then the house would be empty; then the house would be so still. And then John Sibley would come and——

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CHAPTER XI

IN THE CAMP OF THE DESERTER

THREE days passed, but before they ended there came another telegram from Mrs. Crozier stating the time of her expected arrival at Askatoon. It was addressed to Kitty, and Kitty almost savagely tore it up into little pieces and scattered it to the winds. She did not even wait to show it to the Young Doctor; but he had a subtle instinct as to why she did not; and he was rather more puzzled than usual at what was passing before his eyes. In any case, the coming of the wife must alter all the relations existing in the household of the widow Tynan. The old, unrestrained, careless friendship could not continue. The newcomer would import an element of caste and class which would freeze mother and daughter to the bones. Crozier was the essence of democracy, which in its purest form is akin to the most aristocratic element and is easily affiliated with it. He had no fear of Crozier. Crozier would remain exactly the same; but would not Crozier be whisked away out of Askatoon to a new fate, reconciled to being a receiver of his wife's bounty.

"If his wife gets her arms round his neck, and if she wants to get them there, she will, and once there he'll go with her like a gentleman," said the Young Doctor sarcastically. Admiring Crozier as he did, he also had underneath all his knowledge of life an unreasonable apprehension of man's weakness where a

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woman was concerned. The man who would face a cannon's mouth would falter before the face of a woman whom he could crumple with one hand.

The wife arrived before Crozier returned, and the Young Doctor and Kitty met the train. The local operator had not divulged to any one the contents of the telegram to Kitty, and there were no staring spectators on the platform. As the great express stole in almost noiselessly, like a tired serpent, Kitty watched its approach with outward cheerfulness. She had braced herself to this moment, till she looked the most buoyant, joyous thing in the world. It had not come easily. With desperation she had fought a fight during these three lonely days, till at last she had conquered, sleeping each night on Crozier's star-lit bed of boughs and coming in with the silver-grey light of dawn. Now she leaned forward with heart beating fast, but with smiling face and with eyes so bright that she deceived the Young Doctor.

There was no sign of inward emotion, of hidden troubles, as she leaned forward to see the great lady step from the train—great in every sense was this lady in her mind; imposing in stature, a Juno, a tragedy queen, a Zenobia, a daughter of the gods who would not stoop to conquer. She looked in vain, however, for the Mrs. Crozier she had imagined made no appearance from the train. She hastened down the platform still with keen eyes scanning the passengers, who were mostly alighting to stretch their legs and get a breath of air.

"She's not here," she said at last darkly to the Young Doctor who had followed her.

Then suddenly she saw emerge from a little group

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at the steps of a car a child in a long dress—so it seemed to her, the being was so small and delicate—and come forward, having hastily said good-bye to her fellow-passengers. As the Young Doctor said afterwards, "She wasn't bigger than a fly," and she certainly was as graceful and pretty and piquante as a child-woman could be.

Presently, with her alert, rather assertive blue eyes she saw Kitty, and came forward. "Miss Tynan?" she asked, with an encompassing look.

Now Kitty was idiomatic in her speech at times, and she occasionally used slang of the best brand, but she avoided those colloquialisms which were of the vocabulary of the uneducated. Indeed, she had had no inclination to use them, for her father had set her a good example, and she liked to hear good English spoken. That was why Crozier's talk had been like music to her; and she had been keen to distinguish between the rhetorical method of Augustus Burlingame, who modelled himself on the orators of all the continents, and was what might be called a synthetic elocutionist. Kitty was as simple and natural as a girl could be, and as a rule had herself in perfect command; but she was so stunned by the sight of this petite person before her that, in reply to Mrs. Crozier's question, she only said abruptly—

"The same!"

Then she came to herself and could have bitten her tongue out for that plunge into the vernacular of the West; and forthwith a great prejudice was set up in her mind against Mona Crozier, in whose eyes she caught a look of quizzical criticism or, as she thought, contemptuous comment. That for one instant she had been caught unawares and so had put herself at a disadvantage angered her; but she had been embar-

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rassed and confounded by this miniature goddess, and her reply was a vague echo of talk she heard around her every day. Also she could have choked the Young Doctor, whom she caught looking at her with wondering humour, as though he was trying to see "what her game was," as he said to her afterwards.

It was all due to the fact that from the day of the Logan Trial, and particularly from the day when Shiel Crozier had told his life-story, she had always imagined his wife as a stately Amazonian being with the carriage of a Boadicea. She had looked for an empress in splendid garments, and—and here was a humming-bird of a woman, scarcely bigger than a child, with the buzzing energy of a bee, but with a queer sort of manfulness too; with a square, slightly-projecting chin, as Kitty came to notice afterwards; together with some small lines about the mouth and at the eyes, which came from trouble endured and suffering undergone. Kitty did not notice that, but the Young Doctor took it in with his embracing glance, as the wife saluted Kitty with her inward comment, which was—

"So this is the chit who wrote to me like a mother!"

But Mona Crozier did not underestimate Kitty for all that, and she wondered why it was that Kitty had written as she did. One thing was quite clear: Kitty had had good intentions, else why have written at all?

All these thoughts had passed through the mind of each, with a good many others, while they were shaking hands; and the Young Doctor summoned his man to carry Mona's hand-luggage to the extra buggy he had brought to the station. One of the many other thoughts that were passing through three active minds was Kitty's unspoken satire:

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"Just think; this is the woman he talked of as though she was a moving mountain which would fall on you and crush you, if you didn't look out!"

No doubt Crozier would have repudiated this description of his talk, but the fact was he had unconsciously spoken of Mona with a sort of hush in his voice; for a woman to him was something outside real understanding. He had a romantic mediæval view, which translated weakness and beauty into a miracle, and what psychologists call "an inspired control."

"She's no bigger than—than a wasp," said Kitty to herself, after the Young Doctor had assured Mrs. Crozier that her husband was almost well again; that he had recovered more quickly than was expected, and had gained strength wonderfully after the crisis was passed.

"An elephant can crush you, but a wasp can sting you," was Kitty's further inward comment, "and that's why he was always nervous when he spoke of her." Then, as the Young Doctor had already done, she noticed the tiny lines about the tiny mouth, and the fine-spun webs about the bird-bright eyes.

The Young Doctor attributed these lines mostly to anxiety and inward suffering, but Kitty set them down as the outward signs of an inward fretfulness and quarrelsomeness, which was rendered all the more offensive in her eyes by the fact that Mona Crozier was the most spotless thing she had ever seen, at the end of a journey—and this, a journey across a continent. Orderliness and prim exactness, taste and fastidiousness, tireless tidiness were seen in every turn, in every fold of her dress, in the way everything she wore had been put on, in the decision of every step and gesture.

Kitty noticed all this, and she said to herself,

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"Wound up like a watch, cut like a cameo," and she instinctively felt the little dainty cameo-brooch at her own throat, the only jewellery she ever wore, or had ever worn.

"Sensible of her not to bring a maid," commented the Young Doctor inwardly. "That would have thrown Kitty into a fit. Yet how she manages to look like this after six thousand miles of sea and land going is beyond me—and Crozier so rather careless in his ways. Not what you would call two notes in the same key, she and Crozier," he reflected as he told her she need not trouble about her luggage, and took charge of the checks for it.

"My husband—is—is he quite better now?" Mrs. Crozier asked with sharp anxiety, as the two-seated "rig" started away with the ladies in the back seat.

"Oh, better, thanks to him," was Kitty's reply, nodding towards the Young Doctor.

"You have told him I was coming?"

"Wasn't it better to have a talk with you first?" asked Kitty meaningly.

Mrs. Crozier almost nervously twitched the little jet bag she carried, then she looked Kitty in the eyes.

"You will, of course, have reason for thinking so, if you say it," was her enigmatical reply. "And of course you will tell me. You did not let him know that you had written to me, or that the doctor had cabled me?"

"Oh, you got his cable?" questioned Kitty with a little ring of triumph in her voice, meant to reach the ears of the Young Doctor. It did reach him, and he replied to the question.

"We thought it better not; chiefly because he had

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in this country planned his life with an exclusiveness, and on a principle which did not, unfortunately, take you into account."

The little lady blushed, or flushed. "May I ask how you know this to be so, if it is so?" she asked, and there was the sharpness of the wasp in her tone, as it seemed to Kitty.

"The Logan Trial—I mentioned it in my letter to you," interposed Kitty. "He was shot for the evidence he gave at the trial. Well, at the trial a great many questions were asked by a lawyer who wanted to hurt him, and he answered them."

"Why did the lawyer want to hurt him?" Mona Crozier asked quickly.

"Just mean-hearted envy and spite and devilry," was Kitty's answer. "They were both handsome men, and perhaps that was it."

"I never thought my husband handsome, though he was always distinguished looking," was the quiet reply.

"Ah, but you haven't seen him at all for so long!" remarked Kitty, a little spitefully.

"How do you know that?" Mrs. Crozier was nettled, though she did not show it; but Kitty felt it was so, and was glad.

"He said so at the Logan Trial."

"Was that the kind of question asked at the trial?" the wife quickly interjected.

"Yes, lots of that kind," returned Kitty.

"What was the object?"

"To make him look not so distinguished—like nothing. If a man isn't handsome, but only distinguished" —Kitty's mood was dangerous—"and you make him look cheap, that's one advantage, and——"

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Here the Young Doctor, having observed the rising tide of antagonism in the tone of the voices behind him, gently interposed, and made it clear that the purpose was to throw a shadow on the past of her husband in order to discredit his evidence; to which Mrs. Crozier nodded her understanding. She liked the Young Doctor, as who did not who came in contact with him, except those who had fear of him, and who had an idea that he could read their minds as he read their bodies. And even this girl at her side—Mona Crozier realised that the part she had played was evidently an unselfish one, though she felt with piercing intuition that whatever her husband thought of the girl, the girl thought too much of her husband. Somehow, all in a moment, it made her sorry for the girl's sake. The girl had meant well by her husband in sending for his wife, that was certain; and she did not look bad. She was too sedately and reservedly dressed, in spite of her auriferous face and head and her burnished tone, to be bad; too fearless in eye, too concentrated to be the rover in fields where she had no tenure or right.

She turned and looked Kitty squarely in the eyes, and a new, softer look came into her own, subduing what to Kitty was the challenging alertness and selfish inquisitiveness.

"You have been very good to Shiel—you two kind people," she said, and there came a sudden faint mist to her eyes.

That was her lucky moment, and she spoke as she did just in time, for Kitty was beginning to resent her deeply; to dislike her far more than was reasonable, and certainly without any justice.

Kitty spoke up quickly. "Well, you see, he was

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always kind and good to other people, and that was why——"

"But that Mr. Burlingame did not like him?" The wife had a strange intuition regarding Mr. Burlingame. She was sure that there was a woman in the case—the girl beside her?

"That was because Mr. Burlingame was not kind or good to other people," was Kitty's sedate response.

There was an undertone of reflection in the voice which did not escape Mrs. Crozier's senses, and it also caught the ear of the Young Doctor, to whom there came a sudden revelation of the reason why Burlingame had left Mrs. Tynan's house.

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Crozier enigmatically. Presently, with suppressed excitement as she saw the Young Doctor reining in the horses slowly, she added: "My husband—when have you arranged that I should see him?"

"When he gets back—home," Kitty replied, with an accent on the last word.

Mrs. Crozier started visibly. "When he gets back home—back from where? He is not here?" she asked in a tone of chagrin. She had come a long way, and she had pictured this meeting at the end of the journey with a hundred variations, but never with this one—that she should not see Shiel at once when the journey was over, if he was alive. Was it hurt pride or disappointed love which spoke in her face, in her words? After all, it was bad enough that her private life and affairs should be dragged out in a court of law; that these two kind strangers, whom she had never seen till a few minutes ago, should be in the inner circle of knowledge of the life of her husband and herself, without her self-esteem being hurt like

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this. She was very woman, and the look of the thing was not nice to her eyes, while it must belittle her in theirs. Had this girl done it on purpose? Yet why should she—she who had so appealed to her to come to him—have sought to humiliate her?

Kitty was not quite sure what she ought to say. "You see, we expected him back before this. He is very exact——"

"Very *exact*?" asked Mrs. Crozier in astonishment. This was a new phase of Shiel Crozier's character. He must, indeed, have changed since he had caused her so much anxiety in days gone by.

"Usen't he to be so?" asked Kitty, a little viciously. "He is so very exact now," she added. "He expected to be back home before this"—how she loved to use that word *home*—"and so we thought he would be here when you arrived. But he has been detained at Aspen Vale. He had a big business deal on——"

"A big business deal? Is he—is he in a large way of business?" Mona asked almost incredulously. Shiel Crozier in a large way of business, in a big business deal? It did not seem possible. His had ever been the game of chance. Business—business?

"He doesn't talk himself, of course; that wouldn't be like him,"—Kitty had joy in giving this wife the character of her husband,—"but they say that if he succeeds in what he's trying to do now he will make a great deal of money."

"Then he has not made it yet?" asked Mrs. Crozier.

"He has always been able to pay his board regularly, with enough left for a pew in church," answered Kitty with dry malice; for she mistook the light in the other's eyes, and thought it was avarice; and the love

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of money had no place in Kitty's make-up. She herself would never have been influenced by money where a man was concerned.

"Here's the house," she quickly added; "our home, where Mr. Crozier lives. He has the best room, so yours won't be quite so good. It's mother's—she's giving it up to you. With your trunks and things, you'll want a room to yourself," Kitty added, not at all unconscious that she was putting a phase of the problem of Crozier and his wife in a very commonplace way; but she did not look into Mrs. Crozier's face as she said it.

Mrs. Crozier, however, was fully conscious of the poignancy of the remark, and once again her face flushed slightly, though she kept outward composure.

"Mother, mother, are you there?" Kitty called, as she escorted the wife up the garden walk.

An instant later Mrs. Tynan cheerfully welcomed the disturber of the peace of the home where Shiel Crozier had been the central figure for so long.

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CHAPTER XII

AT THE RECEIPT OF CUSTOM

"WHAT are you laughing at, Kitty? You cackle like a young hen with her first egg." So spoke Mrs. Tynan to her daughter, who alternately swung backwards and forwards in a big rocking-chair, silently gazing into the distant sky, or sat still and "cackled" as her mother had said.

A person of real observation and astuteness, however, would have noticed that Kitty's laughter told a story which was not joy and gladness—neither good humour nor the abandonment of a luxurious nature. It was tinged with bitterness and had the smart of the nettle.

Her mother's question only made her laugh the more, and at last Mrs. Tynan stooped over her and said, "I could shake you, Kitty. You'd make a snail fidget, and I've got enough to do to keep my senses steady with all the house-work—and now her in there!" She tossed a hand behind her fretfully.

Quick with love for her mother, as she always was, Kitty caught the other's trembling hand. "You've always had too much to do, mother; always been slaving for others. You've never had time to think whether you're happy or not, or whether you've got a problem—that's what people call things, when they're got so much time on their hands that they make a play of their inside feelings and work it up till it sets them crazy."

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Mrs. Tynan's mouth tightened and her brow clouded. "I've had my problems too, but I always made quick work of them. They never had a chance to overlay me like a mother overlays her baby and kills it."

"Not '*like* a mother overlays,' but '*as* a mother overlays,'" returned Kitty with a queer note to her voice. "That's what they taught me at school. The teacher was always picking us up on that kind of thing. I said a thing worse than that when Mrs. Crozier"—her fingers motioned towards another room —"came to-day. I don't know what possessed me. I was off my trolley, I suppose, as John Sibley puts it. Well, when Mrs. James Shiel Gathorne Crozier said —oh, so sweetly and kindly—'You are Miss Tynan?' what do you think I replied? I said to her, 'The same'!"

Rather an acidly satisfied smile came to Mrs. Tynan's lips. "That was like the Slatterly girls," she replied. "Your father would have said it was the vernacular of the rail-head. He was a great man for odd words, but he knew always just what he wanted to say and he said it out. You've got his gift. You always say the right thing, and I don't know why you made that break with her—of all people."

A meditative look came into Kitty's eyes. "Mr. Crozier says every one has an imp that loves to tease us, and trip us up, and make us appear ridiculous before those we don't want to have any advantage over us."

"I don't want Mrs. Crozier to have any advantage over you and me, I can tell you that. Things'll never be the same here again, Kitty dear, and we've all got on so well; with him so considerate of every one,

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and a good friend always, and just one of us, and his sickness making him seem like our own, and——"

"Oh, hush—will you hush, mother!" interposed Kitty sharply. "He's going away with her back to the old country, and we might just as well think about getting other borders, for I suppose Mr. Bulrush and his bonny bride will set up a little bulrush tabernacle on the banks of the Nile"—she nodded in the direction of the river outside—"and they'll find a little Moses and will treat it as their very own."

"Kitty, how can you!"

Kitty shrugged a shoulder. "It would be ridiculous for that pair to have one of their own. It's only the *young* mother with a new baby that looks natural to me."

"Don't talk that way, Kitty," rejoined her mother sharply. "You aren't fit to judge of such things."

"I will be before long," said her daughter. "Anyway, Mrs. Crozier isn't any better able to talk than I am," she added irrelevantly. "She never was a mother."

"Don't blame her," said Mrs. Tynan severely. "That's God's business. I'd be sorry for her, so far as that was concerned, if I were you. It's not her fault."

"It's an easy way of accounting for good undone," returned Kitty. "P'r'aps it was God's fault, and p'r'aps if she had loved him more——"

Mrs. Tynan's face flushed with sudden irritation and that fretful look came to her eyes which accompanies a lack of comprehension. "Upon my word, well, upon my word, of all the vixens that ever lived, and you looking like a yellow pansy and too sweet for daily use! Such thoughts in your head! Who'd have believed that you——!"

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Kitty made a mocking face at her mother. "I'm more than a girl, I'm a woman, mother, who sees life all around me, from the insect to the mountain, and I know things without being told. I always did. Just life and living tell me things, and maybe, too, the Irish in me that father was."

"It's so odd. You're such a mixture of fun and fancy, at least you always have been; but there's something new in you these days. Kitty, you make me afraid—yes, you make your mother afraid. After what you said the other day about Mr. Crozier I've had bad nights, and I get nervous thinking."

Kitty suddenly got up, put her arm round her mother and kissed her. "You needn't be afraid of me, mother. If there'd been any real danger, I wouldn't have told you. Mr. Crozier's away, and when he comes back he'll find his wife here, and there's the end of everything. If there'd been danger, it would have been settled the night before he went away. I kissed him that night as he was sleeping out there under the trees."

Mrs. Tynan sat down weakly and fanned herself with her apron. "Oh, oh, oh, dear Lord!" she said.

"I'm not afraid to tell you anything I ever did, mother," declared Kitty firmly; "though I'm not prepared to tell you everything I've felt. I kissed him as he slept. He didn't wake, he just lay there sleeping—sleeping." A strange, distant, dreaming look came into her eyes. She smiled like one who saw a happy vision, and an eerie expression stole into her face. "I didn't want him to wake," she continued. "I asked God not to let him wake. If he'd waked—oh, I'd have been ashamed enough till the day I died in one way! Still he'd have understood, and he'd have thought no

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harm. But it wouldn't have been fair to him—and there's his wife in there," she added, breaking off into a different tone. "They're a long way above us—up among the peaks, and we're at the foot of the foothills, mother; but he never made us feel that, did he? The difference between him and most of the men I've ever seen! The difference!"

"There's the Young Doctor," said her mother reproachfully.

"He—him! He's by himself, with something of every sort in him from the top to the bottom. There's been a ditcher in his family, and there may have been a duke. But Shiel Crozier—Shiel"—she flushed as she said the name like that, but a little touch of defiance came into her face too—"he is all of one kind. He's not a blend. And he's married to her in there!"

"You needn't speak in that tone about her. She's as fine as can be."

"She's as fine as a bee," retorted Kitty. Again she laughed that almost mirthless laugh for which her mother had called her to account a moment before. "You asked me a while ago what I was laughing at, mother," she continued. "Why, can't you guess? Mr. Crozier talked of her always as though she was —well, like the pictures you've seen of Britannia. all swelling and spreading, with her hand on a shield and her face saying, 'Look at me and be good,' and her eyes saying, 'Son of man, get upon thy knees!' Why, I expected to see a sort of great-goodness-gracious goddess, that kept him frightened to death of her. Bless you, he never opened her letter, he was so afraid of her; and he used to breathe once or twice hard—like that, when he mentioned her!" She breathed in such

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mock awe that her mother laughed with a little kindly malice too.

"Even her letter," Kitty continued remorselessly, "it was as though she—that little sprite—wrote it with a rod of chastisement, as the Bible says. It——"

"What do you know of the inside of that letter?" asked her mother, staring.

"What the steam of the tea-kettle could let me see," responded Kitty defiantly; and then, to her shocked mother, she told what she had done, and what the nature of the letter was.

"I wanted to help him if I could, and I think I'll be able to do it—I've worked it all out," Kitty added eagerly, with a glint of steel in the gold of her eyes and a fantastic kind of wisdom in her look.

"Kitty," said her mother severely and anxiously, "it's madness interfering with other people's affairs—of that kind. It never was any use."

"This will be the exception to the rule," returned Kitty. "There she is"—again she flicked a hand towards the other room—"after they've been parted five years. Well, she came after she read my letter to her, and after I'd read that unopened letter to him, which made me know how to put it all to her. I've got intuition—that's Celtic and mad," she added, with her chin thrusting out at her mother, to whom the Irish that her husband had been, which was so deep in her daughter, was ever a mystery to her, and of which she was more or less afraid.

"I've got a plan, and I believe—I know—it will work," Kitty continued. "I've been thinking and thinking, and if there's trouble between them; if he says he isn't going on with her till he's made his fortune; if he throws that unopened letter in her face, I'll

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bring in my invention to deal with the problem, and then you'll see! But all this fuss for a little tiny button of a thing like that in there—pshaw! Mr. Crozier is worth a real queen with the beauty of one of the Rhine maidens. How he used to tell that story of the Rhinegold—do you remember? Wasn't it grand? Well, I am glad now that he's going—yes, whatever trouble there may be, still he is going. I feel it in my heart."

She paused, and her eyes took on a sombre tone. Presently, with a slight, husky pain in her voice, like the faint echo of a wail, she went on: "Now that he's going, I'm glad we've had the things he gave us, things that can't be taken away from us. What you have enjoyed is yours for ever and ever. It's memory; and for one moment or for one day or one year of those things you loved, there's fifty years, perhaps, for memory. Don't you remember the verses I cut out of the magazine:

> "'Time, the ruthless idol-breaker,
> Smileless, cold iconoclast,
> Though he rob us of our altars,
> Cannot rob us of the past.'"

"That's the way your father used to talk," replied her mother. "There's a lot of poetry in you, Kitty."

"More than there is in her?" asked Kitty, again indicating the region where Mrs. Crozier was.

"There's as much poetry in her as there is in—in me. But she can do things; that little bit of a baby-woman can do things, Kitty. I know women, and I tell you that if that woman hadn't a penny, she'd set to and earn it; and if her husband hadn't a penny, she'd make his home comfortable just the same some-

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how, for she's as capable as can be. She had her things unpacked, her room in order herself—she didn't want your help or mine—and herself with a fresh dress on before you could turn round."

Kitty's eyes softened still more. "Well, if she'd been poor he would never have left her, and then they wouldn't have lost five years—think of it, five years of life with the man you love lost to you!—and there wouldn't be this tough old knot to untie now."

"She has suffered—that little sparrow has suffered, I tell you, Kitty. She has a grip on herself like—like——"

"Like Mr. Crozier with a broncho under his hand," interjected Kitty. "She's too neat, too eternally spick and span for me, mother. It's as though the Being that made her said, 'Now I'll try and see if I can produce a model of a grown-up, full-sized piece of my work.' Mrs. Crozier is an exhibition model, and Shiel Crozier's over six feet three, and loose and free, and like a wapiti in his gait. If he was a wapiti he'd carry the finest pair of antlers ever was."

"Kitty, you make me laugh," responded the puzzled woman. "I declare, you're the most whimsical creature, and——"

At that moment there came a tapping at the door behind them, and a small, silvery voice said, "May I come in?" as the door opened and Mrs. Crozier, very precisely yet prettily dressed, entered.

"Please make yourself at home—no need to rap," answered Mrs. Tynan. "Out in the West here we live in the open like. There's no room closed to you, if you can put up with what there is, though it's not what you're used to."

"For five months in the year during the past five

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years I've lived in a house about half as large as this," was Mrs. Crozier's reply. "With my husband away there wasn't the need of much room."

"Well, he only has one room here," responded Mrs. Tynan. "He never seemed too crowded in it."

"Where is it? Might I see it?" asked the small, dark-eyed, dark-haired wife, with the little touch of nectarine bloom and a little powder also; and though she spoke in a matter-of-fact tone, there was a look of wistfulness in her eyes, a gleam of which Kitty caught ere it passed.

"You've been separated, Mrs. Crozier," answered the elder woman, "and I've no right to let you into his room without his consent. You've had no correspondence at all for five years—isn't that so?"

"Did he tell you that?" the regal little lady asked composedly, but with an underglow of anger in her eyes.

"He told the court that at the Logan Trial," was the reply.

"At the murder trial—he told that?" Mrs. Crozier asked almost mechanically, her face gone pale and a little haggard.

"He was obliged to answer when that wolf, Gus Burlingame, was after him," interposed Kitty with kindness in her tone, for, suddenly, she saw through the outer walls of the little wife's being into the inner courts. She saw that Mrs. Crozier loved her husband now, whatever she had done in the past. The sight of love does not beget compassion in a loveless heart, but there was love in Kitty's heart; and it was even greater than she would have wished any human being to see; and by it she saw with radium clearness through the veil of the other woman's being.

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"Surely he could have avoided answering that," urged Mona Crozier bitterly.

"Only by telling a lie," Kitty quickly answered, "and I don't believe he ever told a lie in his life. Come," she added, "I will show you his room. My mother needn't do it, and so she won't be responsible. You have your rights as a wife until they're denied you. You mustn't come, mother," she said to Mrs. Tynan, and she put a tender hand on her arm.

"This way," she added to the little person in the pale blue, which suited well her very dark hair, blue eyes, and rose-touched cheeks.

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CHAPTER XIII

KITTY SPEAKS HER MIND AGAIN

A MOMENT later they stood inside Shiel Crozier's room. The first glance his wife gave took in the walls, the table, the bureau, and the desk which contained her own unopened letter. She was looking for a photograph of herself.

There was none in the room, and an arid look came into her face. The glance and its sequel did not escape Kitty's notice. She knew well—as who would not?—what Mona Crozier was hoping to see, and she was human enough to feel a kind of satisfaction in the wife's chagrin and disappointment; for the unopened letter in the baize-covered desk which she had read was sufficient warrant for a punishment and penalty due the little lady, and not the less because it was so long delayed. Had not Shiel Crozier had his draught of bitter herbs to drink over the past five years?

Moreover, Kitty was sure beyond any doubt at all that Shiel Crozier's wife, when she wrote the letter, did not love her husband, or at least did not love him in the right or true way. She loved him only so far as her then selfish nature permitted her to do; only in so far as the pride of money which she had, and her husband had not, did not prevent; only in so far as the nature of a tyrant could love—though the tyranny was pink and white and sweetly perfumed and had the lure of youth. In her primitive way Kitty had intuitively apprehended the main truth, and that was

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enough to justify her in contributing to Mona Crozier's punishment.

Kitty's perceptions were true. At the start, Mona was in nature proportionate to her size; and when she married she had not loved Crozier as he had loved her. Maybe that was why—though he may not have admitted it to himself—he could not bear to be beholden to her when his ruin came. Love makes all things possible, and there is no humiliation in taking from one who loves and is loved, that uncapitalised and communal partnership which is not of the earth earthy. Perhaps that was why, though Shiel loved her, he had had a bitterness which galled his soul; why he had a determination to win sufficient wealth to make himself independent of her. Down at the bottom of his chivalrous Irish heart he had learned the truth, that to be dependent on her would beget in her contempt for him, and he would be only her paid paramour and not her husband in the true sense. Quixotic he had been, but under his quixotism there was at least the shadow of a great tragical fact, and it had made him a matrimonial deserter. Whether tragedy or comedy would emerge was all on the knees of the gods.

"It's a nice room, isn't it?" asked Kitty when there had passed from Mona Crozier's eyes the glaze or mist—not of tears, but stupefaction—which had followed her inspection of the walls, the bureau, the table, and the desk.

"Most comfortable, and so very clean—quite spotless," the wife answered admiringly, and yet drearily. It made her feel humiliated that her man could live this narrow life of one room without despair, with sufficient resistance to the lure of her hundred and fifty thousand pounds and her own delicate and charm-

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ing person. Here, it would seem, he was content. One easy-chair, made out of a barrel, a couch, a bed —a very narrow bed, like a soldier's, a bed for himself alone—a small table, a shelf on the wall with a dozen books, a little table, a bureau, and an old-fashioned, sloping-topped, shallow desk covered with green baize, on high legs, so that like a soldier too he could stand as he wrote (Crozier had made that high stand for the desk himself). That was what the room conveyed to her—the spirit of the soldier, bare, clean, strong, sparse: a workshop and a chamber of sleep in one, like the tent of an officer on the march. After the feeling had come to her, to heighten the sensation she espied a little card hung under the small mirror on the wall. There was writing on it, and going nearer, she saw in red pencil the words, "Courage, soldier!"

These were the words which Kitty was so fond of using, and the girl had a thrill of triumph now as she saw the woman from whom Crozier had fled looking at the card. She herself had come and looked at it many times since Crozier had gone, for he had only put it there just before he left on his last expedition to Aspen Vale to carry through his deal. It had brought a great joy to Kitty's heart. It had made her feel that she had some share in his life; that, in a way, she had helped him on the march, the *vivandière* who carried the water-bag which would give him drink when parched, battle-worn, or wounded.

Mona Crozier turned away from the card, sadly reflecting that nothing in the room recalled herself; that she was not here in the very core of his life in even the smallest way. Yet this girl, this sunny creature with the call of youth and passion in her eyes, this Ruth of the wheat-fields, came and went here as though

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she was a part of it. She did this and that for him, and she was no doubt on such terms of intimacy with him that they were really part of each other's life in a scheme of domesticity unlike any boarding-house organization she had ever known. Here in everything there was the air, the decorum, and the unartificial comfort of home.

This was why he could live without his wedded wife and her gold and her brocade, and the silk and the Persian rugs, and the grand piano and the carriages and the high silk hat from Piccadilly. Her husband had had the luxuries of wealth, and here he was living like a Spartan on his hill—and alone; though he had a wife whom men had beseiged both before and after marriage. A feeling of impotent indignation suddenly took possession of her. Here he was with two women, unattached,—one interesting and good and agreeable and good-looking, and the other almost a beauty,—who were part of the whole rustic scheme in which he lived. They made him comforable, they did the hundred things that a valet or a fond wife would do; they no doubt hung on every word he uttered—and he could be interesting beyond most men. She had realised terribly how interesting he was after he had fled; when men came about her and talked to her in many ways, with many variations, but always with the one tune behind all they said; always making for the one goal, whatever the point from which they started or however circuitous their route.

As time went on she had hungrily longed to see her husband again, and other men had no power to interest her; but still she had not sought to find him. At first it had been offended pride, injured self-esteem, in which the value of her own desirable self and of her

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very desirable fortune was not lost; then it became the pride of a wife in whom the spirit of the eternal woman was working; and she would have died rather than have sought to find him. Five years—and not a word from him.

Five years—and not a letter from him! Her eyes involuntarily fell on the high desk with the green-baize top. Of all the letters he had written at that desk not one had been addressed to her. Slowly, and with an unintentional solemnity, she went up to it and laid a hand upon it. Her chin only cleared the edge of it—he was a tall man, her husband.

"This is the place of secrets, I suppose?" she said, with a bright smile and an attempt at gaiety to Kitty, who had watched her with burning eyes; for she had felt the thrill of the moment. She was as sensitive to atmosphere of this sad play of life as nearly and as vitally as the deserted wife.

"I shouldn't think it a place of secrets," Kitty answered after a moment. "He seldom locks it, and when he does I know where the key is."

"Indeed?" Mona Crozier stiffened. A look of reproach came into her eyes. It was as though she was looking down from a great height upon a poor creature who did not know the first rudiments of personal honour, the fine elemental customs of life.

Kitty saw and understood, but she did not hasten to reply, or to set things right. She met the lofty look unflinchingly, and she had pride and some little malice too—it would do Mrs. Crozier good, she thought—in saying, as she looked down on the humming-bird trying to be an eagle:

"I've had to get things for him—papers and so on, and send them on when he was away, and even when

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he was at home I've had to act for him; and so even when it was locked I had to know where the key was. He asked me to help him that way."

Mona noted the stress laid upon the word *home*, and for the first time she had a suspicion that this girl knew more than even the Logan Trial had disclosed, and that she was being satirical and suggestive.

"Oh, of course," she returned cheerfully in response to Kitty—"you acted as a kind of clerk for him!"

There was a note in her voice which she might better not have used. If she but knew it, she needed this girl's friendship very badly. She ought to have remembered that she would not have been here in her husband's room had it not been for the letter Kitty had written—a letter which had made her heart beat so fast when she received it, that she had sunk helpless to the floor on one of those soft rugs, representing the soft comfort which wealth can bring.

The reply was like a slap in the face.

"I acted for him in any way at all that he wished me to," Kitty answered, with quiet boldness and shining, defiant face.

Mona's hand fell away from the green baize desk, and her eyes again lost their sight for a moment. Kitty was not savage by nature. She had been goaded as much by the thought of the letter Crozier's wife had written to him in the hour of his ruin as by the presence of the woman in this house, where things would never be as they had been before. She had struck hard, and now she was immediately sorry for it: for this woman was here in response to her own appeal; and, after all, she might well be jealous of the fact that Crozier had had close to him for so long and in

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such conditions a girl like herself, younger than his own wife, and prettier—yes, certainly prettier, she admitted to herself.

"He is that kind of a man. What he asked for, any good woman could give and not be sorry," Kitty convincingly added when the knife had gone deep enough.

"Yes, he was that kind of a man," responded the other gently now, and with a great sigh of relief. Suddenly she came nearer and touched Kitty's arm. "And thank you for saying so," she added. "He and I have been so long parted, and you have seen so much more of him than I have of late years! You know him better—as he is. If I said something sharp just now, please forgive me. I am—indeed, I am grateful to you and your mother."

She paused. It was hard for her to say what she felt she must say, for she did not know how her husband would receive her—he had done without her for so long; and she might need this girl and her mother sorely. The girl was a friend in the best sense, or she would not have sent for her. She must remind herself of this continually lest she should take wrong views.

Kitty nodded, but for a moment she did not reply. Her hand was on the baize-covered desk. All at once, with determination in her eyes, she said: "You didn't use him right or you'd not have been parted for five years. You were rich and he was poor,—he is poor now, though he may be rich any day,—and he wouldn't stay with you because he wouldn't take your money to live on. If you had been a real wife to him he wouldn't have seen that he'd be using your money; he'd have taken it as though it was his own, out of

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the purse always open and belonging to both, just as though you were partners. You must feel——"

"Hush, for pity's sake, hush!" interrupted the other.

"You are going to see him again," Kitty persisted. "Now, don't you think it just as well to know what the real truth is?"

"How do you know what is the truth?" asked the trembling little stranger with a last attempt to hold her position, to conceal from herself the actual facts.

"The Young Doctor and my mother and I were with him all the time he was ill after he was shot, and the Trial had only told half the truth. He wanted us, his best friends here, to know the whole truth, so he told us that he left you because he couldn't bear to live on your money. It was you made him feel that, though he didn't say so. All the time he told his story he spoke of you as though you were some goddess, some great queen——"

A look of hope, of wonder, of relief came into the tiny creature's eyes. "He spoke like that of me; he said——?"

"He said what no one else would have said, probably; but that's the way with people in love—they see what no one else sees, they think what no one else thinks. He talked with a sort of hush in his voice about you till we thought you must be some stately, tall, splendid Helen of Troy with a soul like an ocean, instead of"—she was going to say something that would have seemed unkind, and she stopped herself in time—"instead of a sort of fairy, one of the little folk that never grow up; the same as my father used to tell me about."

"You think very badly of me, then?" returned the

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other with a sigh. Her courage, her pride, her attempt to control the situation had vanished suddenly, and she became for the moment almost the child she looked.

"We've only just begun. We're all his friends here, and we'll judge you and think of you according to what happens between you and him. *You wrote him that letter!*"

She suddenly placed her hand on the desk as the inspiration came to her to have this matter of the letter out now, and to have Mrs. Crozier know exactly what the position was, no matter what might be thought of herself. She was only thinking of Shiel Crozier and his future now.

"What letter did I write?" There was real surprise and wonder in her tone.

"That last letter you wrote to him—the letter in which you gave him fits for breaking his promise, and talked like a proud, angry angel from the top of the stairs."

"How do you know of that letter? He, my husband, told you what was in that letter; he showed it to you?" The voice was indignant, low, and almost rough with anger.

"Yes, your husband showed me the letter—unopened."

"Unopened—I do not understand." Mona steadied herself against the foot of the bed and looked in a helpless way at Kitty. Her composure was gone, though she was very quiet, and she had that look of a vital absorption which possesses human beings in crises of their lives.

Suddenly Kitty took from behind a book on the shelf a key, opened the desk, and drew out the letter

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which Crozier had kept sealed and unopened all the years, which he had never read.

"Do you know that?" Kitty asked, and held it out for Mrs. Crozier to see.

Two dark blue eyes stared confusedly at the letter —at her own handwriting. Kitty turned it over. "You see it is closed as it was when you sent it to him. He has never opened it. He does not know what is in it."

"He has—kept it—five years—unopened," Mona said in broken phrases scarce above a whisper.

"He has never opened it, as you see."

"Give—give it to me," the wife said, stepping forward to stay Kitty's hand as she opened the lid of the desk to replace the letter.

"It's not your letter—no, you shall not," said Kitty firmly as she jerked aside the hand laid upon her wrist, and threw one arm on the lid, holding it down as Mrs. Crozier tried to keep it open. Then with a swift action of the free hand she locked the desk and put the key in her pocket.

"If you destroyed this letter he would never believe but that it was worse than it is; and it is bad enough, Heaven knows, for any woman to have written to her husband—or to any one else's husband. You thought you were the centre of the world when you wrote that letter. Without a penny, he would be a great man, with a great future; but you are only a pretty little woman with a fortune, who has thought a great lot of herself, and far too much of herself only, when she wrote that letter."

"How do you know what is in it?" There was agony and challenge at once in the other's voice.

"Because I read it—oh, don't look so shocked! I'd do it again. I knew just how to act when I'd read

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it. I steamed it open and closed it up again. Then I wrote to you. I'm not sorry I did it. My motive was a good one. I wanted to help him. I wanted to understand everything, so that I'd know best what to do. Though he's so far above us in birth and position, he seemed in one way like our own. That's the way it is in new countries like this. We don't think of lots of things that you finer people in the old countries do, and we don't think evil till it trips us up. In a new country all are strangers among the pioneers, and they have to come together. This town is only twenty years old, and scarcely anybody knew each other at the start. We had to take each other on trust, and we think the best as long as we can. Mr. Crozier came to live with us, and soon he was just part of our life—not a boarder; not some one staying the night who paid you what he owed you in the morning. He was a friend you could say your prayers with, or eat your meals with, or ride a hundred miles with, and just take it as a matter of course; for he was part of what you were part of, all this out here—don't you understand?"

"I am trying hard to do so," was the reply in a hushed voice. Here was a world, here were people of whom Mona Crozier had never dreamed. They were so much of an antique time—far behind the time that her old land represented; not a new world, but the oldest world of all. She began to understand the girl also, and her face took on a comprehending look, as with eyes like bronze suns Kitty continued:

"So, though it was wrong—wicked—in one way, I read the letter, to do some good by it, if it could be done. If I hadn't read it you wouldn't be here. Was it worth while?"

At that moment there was a knock at the outer

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door of the other room, or, rather, on the lintel of it. Mona started. Suppose it was her husband—that was her thought.

Kitty read the look. "No, it isn't Mr. Crozier. It's the Young Doctor. I know his knock. Will you come and see him?"

The wife was trembling, she was very pale, her eyes were rather staring, but she fought to control herself. It was evident that Kitty expected her to do so. It was also quite certain that Kitty meant to settle things now, in so far as it could be done.

"He knows as much as you do?" asked Mrs. Crozier.

"No, the Young Doctor hasn't read the letter and I haven't told him what's in it; but he knows that I read it, and what he doesn't know he guesses. He is Mr. Crozier's honest, clever friend. I've got an idea—an invention to put this thing right. It's a good one. You'll see. But I want the Young Doctor to know about it. He never has to think twice. He knows what to do the very first time."

A moment later they were in the other room, with the Young Doctor smiling down at "the little spot of a woman," as he called Crozier's wife.

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CHAPTER XIV

AWAITING THE VERDICT

"You look quite settled and at home," the Young Doctor remarked, as he offered Mrs. Crozier a chair.

She took it, for never in her life had she felt so small physically since coming to the great, new land. The islands where she was born were in themselves so miniature that the minds of their people, however small, were not made to feel insignificant. But her mind, which was, after all, vastly larger in proportion than the body enshrining it, felt suddenly that both were lost in a universe. Her impulse was to let go and sink into the helplessness of tears, to be overwhelmed by an unconquerable loneliness; but the Celtic courage in her, added to that ancient native pride which prevents one woman from giving way before another woman towards whom she bears jealousy, prevented her from showing the weakness she felt. Instead, it roused her vanity and made her choose to sit down, so disguising perceptibly the disparity of height which gave Kitty an advantage over her and made the Young Doctor like some menacing Polynesian god.

Both these people had an influence and authority in Mona Crozier's life which now outweighed the advantage wealth gave her. Her wealth had not kept her husband beside her when delicate and perfumed tyranny began to flutter its banners of control over him. Her fortune had driven him forth when her

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beauty and her love ought to have kept him close to her, whatever fate might bring to their door, or whatever his misfortune or the catastrophe falling on him. It was all deeply humiliating, and the inward dejection made her now feel that her body was the last effort of a failing creative power. So she sat down instead of standing up in a vain effort at retrieval.

The Young Doctor sat down also, but Kitty did not, and in her buoyant youth and command of the situation she seemed Amazonian to Mona's eyes. It must be said for Kitty that she remained standing only because a restlessness had seized her which was not present when she was with Mona in Crozier's room. It was now as though something was going to happen which she must face standing; as though something was coming out of the unknown and forbidding future and was making itself felt before its time. Her eyes were almost painfully bright as she moved about the room doing little things. Presently she began to lay a cloth and place dishes silently on the table—long before the proper time, as her mother reminded her when she entered for a moment and then quickly passed on into the kitchen, at a warning glance from Kitty, which said that the Young Doctor and Mona were not to be disturbed.

"Well, Askatoon is a place where one feels at home quickly," added the Young Doctor, as Mona did not at once respond to his first remark. "Every one who comes here always feels as though he—or she—owns the place. It's the way the place is made. The trouble with most of us is that we want to put the feeling into practice and take possession of 'all and sundry.' Isn't that true, Miss Tynan?"

"As true as most things you say," retorted Kitty,

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as she flicked the white tablecloth. "If mother and I hadn't such wonderful good health I suppose you'd come often enough here to give you real possession. Do you know, Mrs. Crozier," she added, with her wistful eyes vainly trying to be merely mischievous, "he once charged me five dollars for torturing me like a Red Indian. I had put my elbow out of joint, and he put it in again with his knee and both hands, as though it was the wheel of a wagon and he was trying to put on the tire."

"Well, you were running round soon after," answered the Young Doctor. "But as for the five dollars, I only took it to keep you quiet. So long as you had a grievance you would talk and talk and talk, and you never were so astonished in your life as when I took that five dollars."

"I've taken care never to dislocate my elbow since."

"No, not your elbow," remarked the Young Doctor meaningly, and turned to Mona, who had now regained her composure.

"Well, I shan't call you in to reduce the dislocation—that's the medical term, isn't it?" persisted Kitty, with fire in her eyes.

"What is the dislocation?" asked Mona, with a subtle, inquiring look but a manner which conveyed interest.

The Young Doctor smiled. "It's only her way of saying that my mind is unhinged and that I ought to be sent to a private hospital for two."

"No—only one," returned Kitty.

"Marriage means common catastrophe, doesn't it?" he asked quizzically.

"Generally it means that one only is permanently

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injured," replied Kitty, lifting a tumbler and looking through it at him as though to see if the glass was properly polished.

Mona was mystified. At first she thought there had been oblique references to her husband, but these remarks about marriage would certainly exclude him. Yet, would they exclude him? During the time in which Shiel's history was not known might there not have been—but no, it could not have been so, for it was Kitty who had sent the letter which had brought her to Askatoon.

"Are you to be married—soon?" she asked of Kitty, with a friendly yet trembling smile, for her agitation was, despite appearances, troubling every nerve.

"I've thought of it quite lately," responded Kitty calmly, seating herself now and looking straight into the eyes of the woman, who was suggesting more truth than she knew.

"May I congratulate you? Am I justified on such slight acquaintance? I am sure you have chosen wisely," was the smooth rejoinder.

Kitty did not shrink from looking Mona in the eyes. "It isn't quite time for congratulations yet, and I'm not sure I've chosen wisely. My family very strongly disapproves. I can't help that, of course, and I may have to elope and take the consequences."

"It takes two to elope," interposed the Young Doctor, who thought that Kitty, in her humorous extravagance, was treading very dangerous ground indeed. He was thinking of Crozier and Kitty; but Kitty was thinking of Crozier, and meaning John Sibley. Somehow she could not help playing with this torturing thing in the presence of the wife of the

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man who was the real "man in possession" so far as her life was concerned.

"Why, he is waiting on the doorstep," replied Kitty boldly and referring only to John Sibley.

At that minute there was the crunch of gravel on the pathway and the sound of a quick footstep. Kitty and Mona were on their feet at once. Both recognised the step of Shiel Crozier. Presently the Young Doctor recognised it also, but he rose with more deliberation.

At that instant a voice calling from the road arrested Crozier's advance to the open door of the room where they were. It was Jesse Bulrush asking a question. Crozier paused in his progress, and in the moment's time it gave, Kitty, with a swift look of inquiry and with a burst of the real soul in her, caught the hand of Crozier's wife and pressed it warmly. Then, with a face flushed and eyes that looked straight ahead of her, she left the room as the Young Doctor went to the doorway and stepped outside. Within ten feet of the door he met Crozier.

"How goes it, patient?" he said, standing in Crozier's way. Being a man who thought much and wisely for other people, he wanted to give the wife time to get herself in control.

"Right enough in your sphere of operations," answered Crozier.

"And not so right in other fields, eh?"

"I've come back after a fruitless hunt. They've got me, the thieves!" said Crozier, with a look which gave his long face an almost tragic austerity. Then suddenly the look changed, the mediæval remoteness passed, and a thought flashed up into his eyes which made his expression alive with humour.

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"Isn't it wonderful, that just when a man feels he wants a rope to hang himself with, the rope isn't to be had?" he exclaimed. "Before he can lay his hands on it he wants to hang somebody else, and then he has to pause whether he will or no. Did I ever tell you the story of the old Irishwoman who lived down at Kenmare, in Kerry? Well, she used to sit at her doorway and lament the sorrows of the world with a depth of passion that you'd think never could be assuaged. 'Oh, I fale so bad, I am so wake—oh, I do fale so bad,' she used to say. 'I wish some wan would take me by the ear and lade me round to the ould shebeen, and set me down, and fill a noggen of whusky and make me dhrink it—whether I would or no!' Whether I would or no I have to drink the cup of self-denial," Crozier continued, "though Bradley and his gang have closed every door against me here, and I've come back without what I went for at Aspen Vale, for my men were away. I've come back without what I went for, but I must just grin and bear it." He shrugged his shoulders and gave a great sigh.

"Perhaps you'll find what you went for here," returned the Young Doctor meaningly.

"There's a lot here—enough to make a man think life worth while"—inside the room the wife shrank at the words, for she could hear all—"but just the same I'm not thinking the thing I went to look for is hereabouts.'"

"You never know your luck," was the reply. "'Ask and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.'"

The long face blazed up with humour again. "Do you mean that I haven't asked *you* yet?" Crozier remarked, with a quizzical look, which had still that

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faint hope against hope which is a painful thing for a good man's eyes to see.

The Young Doctor laid a hand on Crozier's arm. "No, I didn't mean that, patient. I'm in that state when every penny I have is out to keep me from getting a fall. I'm in that Starwhon coal-mine down at Bethbridge, and it's like a suction-pump. I couldn't borrow a thousand dollars myself now. I can't do it, or I'd stand in with you, Crozier. No, I can't help you a bit; but step inside. There's a room in this house where you got back your life by the help of a knife. There's another room in there where you may get back your fortune by the help of a wife."

Stepping aside he gave the wondering Crozier a slight push forward into the doorway, then left him and hurried round to the back of the house, where he hoped he might see Kitty.

The Young Doctor found Kitty pumping water on a pail of potatoes and stirring them with a broom-handle.

"A most unscientific way of cleaning potatoes," he said, as Kitty did not look at him. "If you put them in a trough where the water could run off, the dirt would go with the water, and you would'nt waste time and intelligence, and your fingers would be cleaner in the end."

The only reply Kitty made was to flick the broom-head at him. It had been dipped in water, and the spray from it slightly spattered his face.

"Will you never grow up?" he exclaimed as he applied a handkerchief to his ruddy face.

"I'd like you so much better if you were younger—will you never be young?" she asked.

"It makes a man old before his time to have to meet you day by day and live near you."

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"Why don't you try living *with* me?" she retorted.

"Ah, then, you meant me when you said to Mrs. Crozier that you were going to be married? Wasn't that a bit 'momentary'? as my mother's cook used to remark. I think we haven't 'kept company'—you and I."

"It's true you haven't been a beau of mine, but I'd rather marry you than be obliged to live with you," was the paradoxical retort.

"You have me this time," he said, trying in vain to solve her reply.

Kitty tossed her head. "No, I haven't got you this time, thank Heaven, and I don't want you; but I'd rather marry you than live with you, as I said. Isn't it the custom for really nice-minded people to marry to get rid of each other—for five years, or for ever and ever and ever?"

"What a girl you are, Kitty Tynan!" he said reprovingly. He saw that she meant Crozier and his wife.

Kitty ceased her work for an instant and, looking away from him into the distance, said: "Three people said those same words to me all in one day a thousand years ago. It was Mr. Crozier, Jesse Bulrush, and my mother; and now you've said it a thousand years after; as with your inexpensive education and slow mind you'd be sure to do."

"I have an idea that Mrs. Crozier said the same to you also this very day. Did she—come, did she?"

"She didn't say, 'What a girl you are!' but in her mind she probably did say, 'What a vixen!'"

The Young Doctor nodded satirically. "If you continued as you began when coming from the station, I'm sure she did; and also I'm sure it wasn't wrong of her to say it."

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"I wanted her to say it. That's why I uttered the too, too utter-things, as the comic opera says. What else was there to do? I had to help cure her."

"To cure her of what, miss?"

"Of herself, doctor-man."

The Young Doctor's look became graver. He wondered greatly at this young girl's sage instinct and penetration. "Of herself? Ah, yes, to think more of some one else than herself! That is——"

"Yes, that is love," Kitty answered, her head bent over the pail and stirring the potatoes hard.

"I suppose it is," he answered.

"I know it is," she returned.

"Is that why you are going to be married?" he asked quizzically.

"It will probably cure the man I marry of himself," she retorted. "Oh, neither of us know what we are talking about—let's change the subject!" she added impatiently now, with a change of mood, as she poured the water off the potatoes.

There was a moment's silence in which they were both thinking of the same thing. "I wonder how it's all going inside there?" he remarked. "I hope all right, but I have my doubts."

"I haven't any doubt at all. It isn't going right," she answered ruefully; "but it has to be made go right."

"Whom do you think can do that?"

Kitty looked him frankly and decisively in the face. Her eyes had the look of a dreaming pietist for the moment. The deep-sea soul of her was awake. "I can do it if they don't break away altogether at once. I helped her more than you think. I told her I had opened that letter."

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He gasped. "My dear girl—that letter—you told her you had done such a thing, such——!"

"Don't *dear girl* me, if you please. I know what I am doing. I told her that and a great deal more. She won't leave this house the woman she was yesterday. She is having a quick cure—a cure while you wait."

"Perhaps he is cured of her," remarked the Young Doctor very gravely.

"No, no, the disease might have got headway, but it didn't," Kitty returned, her face turned away. "He became a little better; but he was never cured. That's the way with a man. He can never forget a woman he has once cared for, and he can go back to her half loving her; but it isn't the case with a woman. There's nothing so dead to a woman as a man when she's cured of him. The woman is never dead to the man, no matter what happens."

The Young Doctor regarded her with a strange, new interest and a puzzled surprise. "Sappho—Sappho, how did you come to know these things!" he exclaimed. "You are only a girl at best, or something of a boy-girl at worst, and yet you have, or think you have, got into those places which are reserved for the old-timers in life's scramble. You talk like an ancient dame."

Kitty smiled, but her eyes had a slumbering look as if she was half dreaming. "That's the mistake most of you make—men and women. There's such a thing as instinct, and there's such a thing as keeping your eyes open."

"What did Mrs. Crozier say when you told her about opening that five-year-old letter? Did she hate you?"

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Kitty nodded with wistful whimsicality. "For a minute she was like an industrious hornet. Then I made her see she wouldn't have been here at all if I hadn't opened it. That made her come down from the top of her nest on the church-spire, and she said that, considering my opportunities, I was not such an aboriginal after all."

"Now, look you, Saphira, prospective wife of Ananias, she didn't say that, of course. Still, it doesn't matter, does it? The point is, suppose he opens that letter now."

"If he does, he'll probably not go with her. It was a letter that would send a man out with a scalping-knife. Still, if Mr. Crozier had his land-deal through he might not read the letter as it really is. His brain wouldn't then be grasping what his eyes saw."

"He hasn't got his land-deal through. He told me so just now before he saw her."

"Then it's *ora pro nobis*—it's pray for us hard," rejoined Kitty sorrowfully. "Poor man from Kerry!"

At that moment Mrs. Tynan came from the house, her face flushed, her manner slightly agitated. "John Sibley is here, Kitty—with two saddle-horses. He says you promised to ride with him to-day."

"I probably did," responded Kitty calmly. "It's a good day for riding too. But John will have to wait. Please tell him to come back at six o'clock. There'll be plenty of time for an hour's ride before sundown."

"Are you lame, dear child?" asked her mother ironically. "Because if you're not, perhaps you'll be your own messenger. It's no way to treat a friend—or whatever you like to call him."

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Kitty smiled tenderly at her mother. "Then would you mind telling him to come here, mother darling? I'm giving this doctor-man a prescription. Ah, please do what I ask you, mother! It is true about the prescription. It's not for himself; it's for the foreign people quarantined inside." She nodded towards the room where Shiel Crozier and his wife were shaping their fate.

As her mother disappeared with a gesture of impatience and the remark that she washed her hands of the whole Sibley business, the Young Doctor said to Kitty, "What is your prescription, Ma'm'selle Saphira? Suppose they come out of quarantine with a clean bill of health?"

"If they do that you needn't make up the prescription. But if Aspen Vale hasn't given him what he wanted, then Mr. Shiel Crozier will still be an exile from home and the angel in the house."

"What is the prescription? Out with your Sibylline leaves!"

"It's in that unopened letter. When the letter is opened you'll see it effervesce like a seidlitz powder."

"But suppose I am not here when the letter is opened?"

"You must be here—you must. You'll stay now, if you please."

"I'm afraid I can't. I have patients waiting."

Kitty made an impetuous gesture of command. "There are two patients here who are at the crisis of their disease. You may be wanted to save a life any minute now."

"I thought that with your prescription you were to be the Æsculapius."

"No, I'm only going to save the reputation of

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Æsculapius by giving him a prescription got from a quack to give to a goose."

"Come, come, no names. You are incorrigible. I believe you'd have your joke on your death-bed."

"I should if you were there. I should die laughing," Kitty retorted.

"There will be no death-bed for you, miss. You'll be translated—no, that's not right; no one could translate you."

"God might—or a man I loved well enough not to marry him."

There was a note of emotion in her laugh as she uttered the words. It did not escape the ear of the Young Doctor, who regarded her fixedly for a moment before he said: "I'm not sure that even He would be able to translate you. You speak your own language, and it's surely original. I am only just learning its alphabet. No one else speaks it. I have a fear that you'll be terribly lonely as you travel along the trail, Kitty Tynan."

A light of pleasure came into Kitty's eyes, though her face was a little drawn. "You really do think I'm original—that I'm myself and not like anybody else?" she asked him with a childlike eagerness.

"Almost more than any one I ever met," answered the Young Doctor gently; for he saw that she had her own great troubles, and he also felt now fully what this comedy or tragedy inside the house meant to her. "But you're terribly lonely—and that's why: because you are the only one of your kind."

"No, that's why I'm not going to be lonely," she said, nodding towards the corner of the house where John Sibley appeared.

Suddenly, with a gesture of confidence and almost

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of affection, she laid a hand on the Young Doctor's breast. "I've left the trail, doctor-man. I'm cutting across the prairie. Perhaps I shall reach camp and perhaps I shan't; but anyhow I'll know that I met one good man on the way. And I also saw a rest-house that I'd like to have stayed at, but the blinds were drawn and the door was locked."

There was a strange, eerie look in her face again as her eyes of soft umber dwelt on his for a moment; then she turned with a gay smile to John Sibley, who had seen her hand on the Young Doctor's chest without dismay; for the joy of Kitty was that she hid nothing; and, anyhow, the Young Doctor had a place of his own; and also, anyhow, Kitty did what she pleased. Once when she had visited the Coast the Governor had talked to her with great gusto and friendliness; and she had even gone so far as to touch his arm while, chuckling at her whimsically, he listened to a story she told him of life at the rail-head. And the Governor had patted her fingers in quite a fatherly way—or not, as the mind of the observer saw it; while subsequently his secretary had written verses to her.

"So you've been gambling again—you've broken your promise to me," she said reprovingly to Sibley, but with that wonderful, wistful laughter in her eyes.

Sibley looked at her in astonishment. "Who told you?" he asked. It had only happened the night before, and it didn't seem possible she could know.

He was quite right. It wasn't possible she could know, and she didn't know. She only divined.

"I knew when you made the promise you couldn't keep it; that's why I forgive you now," she added. "Knowing what I did about you, I oughtn't to have let you make it."

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The Young Doctor saw in her words a meaning that John Sibley could never have understood, for it was a part of the story of Crozier's life reproduced—and with what a different ending!

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CHAPTER XV

"MALE AND FEMALE CREATED HE THEM"

WHEN Crozier stepped out of the bright sunlight into the shady living-room of the Tynan home, his eyes were clouded by the memory of his conference with Studd Bradley and his financial associates, and by the desolate feeling that the five years since he had left England had brought him nothing—nothing at all except a new manhood. But that he did not count an asset, because he had not himself taken account of this new capital. He had never been an introspective man in the philosophic sense, and he never had thought that he was of much account. He had lived long on his luck, and nothing had come of it—"nothing at all, at all," as he said to himself when he stepped inside the room where, unknown to him, his wife awaited him. So abstracted was he, so disturbed was his gaze (fixed on the inner thing), that he did not see the figure in blue and white over against the wall, her hand on the big arm-chair once belonging to Tyndall Tynan, and now used always by Shiel Crozier, "the white-haired boy of the Tynan sanatorium," as Jesse Bulrush had called him.

There was a strange timidity, and a fear not so strange, in Mona's eyes as she saw her husband enter with that quick step which she had so longingly remembered after he had fled from her; but of which she had taken less account when he was with her at Lammis long ago—When Crozier of Lammis was with

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her long ago. How tall and shapely he was! How large he loomed with the light behind him! How shadowed his face and how distant the look in his eyes!

Somehow the room seemed too small for him, and yet he had lived in this very house for four years and more; he had slept in the next room all that time; had eaten at this table and sat in this very chair—Mrs. Tynan had told her that—for this long time, like the master of a household. With that far-away, brooding look in his face, he seemed in one sense as distant from her as when she was in London in those dreary, desolate years with no knowledge of his whereabouts, a widow in every sense save one; but in her acts—that had to be said for her—a wife always and not a widow. She had not turned elsewhere, though there had been temptation enough to do so.

Crozier advanced to the centre of the room, even to the table laid for dinner, before he was conscious of some one in the room, of a figure by the chair. For a moment he stood still, startled as if he had seen a vision, and his sight became blurred. When it cleared, Mona had come a step nearer to him, and then he saw her clearly. He caught his breath as though Life had burst upon him with some staggering revelation. If she had been a woman of genius, as in her way Kitty Tynan was, she would have spoken before he had a chance to do so. Instead, she wished to see how he would greet her, to hear what he would say. She was afraid of him now. It was not her gift to do the right thing by perfect instinct; she had to think things out; and so she did now. Still it has to be said for her that she also had a strange, deep sense of apprehension in the presence of the man whose arms had held her fast, and then let her go for so bitter a length of time,

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in which her pride was lacerated and her heart brought low. She did not know how she was going to be met now, and a womanly shyness held her back. If she had said one word—his name only—it might have made a world of difference to them both at that moment; for he was tortured by failure, and now when hope was gone, here was the woman whom he had left in order to force gifts from fate to bring himself back to her.

"You—you here!" he exclaimed hoarsely. He did not open his arms to her or go a step nearer to her. His look was that of blank amazement, of mingled remembrance and stark realisation. This was a turn of affairs for which he had made no calculation. There had ever been the question of his return to her, but never of her coming to him. Yet here she was, *débonnaire* and fresh and perfectly appointed—and ah, so terribly neat and spectacularly finessed! Here she was with all that expert formality which, in the old days, had been a reproach to his loosely-swung life and person, to his careless, almost slovenly but well-brushed, cleanly, and polished ease—not like his wife, as though he had been poured out of a mould and set up to dry. He was not tailor-made, and she had ever been so exact that it was as though she had been crystallised, clothes and all—a perfect crystal, yet a crystal. It was this very perfection, so charming to see, but in a sense so inhuman, which had ever dismayed him. "What should I be doing in the home of an angel!" he had exclaimed to himself in the old home at Lammis.

Truth is, he ought never to have had such a feeling, and he would not have had it, if she had diffused the radiance of love, which would have made her outer

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perfectness mere slovenliness beside her inner charm and magnetism. Very little of all this passed through Crozier's mind, as with confused vision he looked at her. He had borne the ordeal of the witness-box in the Logan Trial with superb coolness; he had been in physical danger over and over again, and had kept his head; he had never been faced by a human being who embarrassed him—except his own wife. "There is no fear like that of one's own wife," was the saying of an ancient philosopher, and Crozier had proved it true; not because of errors committed, but because he was as sensitive as a girl of sensibility; because he felt that his wife did not understand him, and he was ever in fear of doing the wrong thing, while eager beyond telling to please her. After all, during the past five years, parted from her while loving her, there had still been a feeling of relief unexplainable to himself in not having to think whether he was pleasing her or not, or to reproach himself constantly that he was failing to conform to her standard.

"How did you come—why? How did you know?" he asked helplessly, as she made no motion to come nearer; as she kept looking at him with an expression in her eyes wholly unfamiliar to him. Yet it was not wholly unfamiliar, for it belonged to the days when he courted her, when she seemed to have got nearer to him than in the more intimate relations of married life.

"Is—is that all you have to say to me, Shiel?" she asked, with a swelling note of feeling in her voice; while there was also emerging in her look an elusive pride which might quickly become sharp indignation. That her deserter should greet her so after five years of such offence to a woman's self-respect, as might

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entitle her to become a rebel against matrimony, was too cruel to be borne. This feeling suddenly became alive in her, in spite of a joy in her heart different from that which she had ever known; in defiance of the fact that now that they were together once more, what would she not do to prevent their being driven apart again!

"After abandoning me for five years, is that all you have to say to me, Shiel? After I have suffered before the world——"

He threw up his arms with a passionate gesture. "The world!" he exclaimed—"the devil take the world! I've been out of it for five years, and well out of it. What do I care for the world!"

She drew herself up in a spirit of defence. "It isn't what you care for the world, but I had to live in it—alone, and because I was alone, eyebrows were lifted. It has been easy enough for you. You were where no one knew you. You had your freedom"—she advanced to the table, and, as though unconsciously, he did the same, and they gazed at each other over the white linen and its furnishings—"and no one was saying that your wife had left you for this or that, because of her bad conduct or of yours. Either way it was not what was fair and just; yet I had to bear and suffer, not you. There is no pain like it. There I was in misery and ——"

A bitter smile came to his lips. "A woman can endure a good deal when she has all life's luxuries in her grasp. Did you ever think, Mona, that a man must suffer when he goes out into a world where he knows no one, penniless, with no trade, no profession, nothing except his own helpless self? He might have stayed behind among the luxuries that belonged to

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another, and eaten from the hand of his wife's charity, but"—(all the pride and pain of the old situation rose up in him, impelled by the brooding of the years of separation, heightened by the fact that he was no nearer to his goal of financial independence of her than he was when he left London five years before)—"but do you think, no matter what I've done, broken a pledge or not, been in the wrong a thousand times as much as I was, that I'd be fed by the hand of one to whom I had given a pledge and broken it? Do you think that I'd give her the chance to say, or not to say, but only think, 'I forgive you; I will give you your food and clothes and board and bed, but if you are not good in the future, I will be very, very angry with you'? Do you think——?"

His face was flaming now. The pent-up flood of remorse and resentment and pride and love—the love that tore itself in pieces because it had not the pride and self-respect which independence as to money gives—broke forth in him, fresh as he was from a brutal interview with the financial clique whom he had given the chance to make much money, and who were now, for a few thousand dollars, trying to cudgel him out of his one opportunity to regain his place in his lost world.

"I live—I live like this," he continued, with a gesture that embraced the room where they were, "and I have one room to myself where I have lived over four years"—he pointed towards it. "Do you think I would choose this and all it means—its poverty and its crudeness, its distance from all I ever had and all my people had, if I could have stood the other thing—a pauper taking pennies from his own wife? I had had taste enough of it while I had a little some-

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thing left; but when I lost everything on Flamingo, and I was a beggar, I knew I could not stand the whole thing. I could not, would not, go under the poor-law and accept you, with the lash of a broken pledge in your hand, as my guardian. So that's why I left, and that's why I stay here, and that's why I'm going to stay here, Mona."

He looked at her firmly, though his face had that illumination which the spirit in his eyes—the Celtic fire drawn through the veins of his ancestors—gave to all he did and felt; and now as in a dream he saw little things in her he had never seen before. He saw that a little strand of her beautiful dark hair had broken away from its ordered place and hung prettily against the rosy, fevered skin of her cheek just beside her ear. He saw that there were no rings on her fingers save one, and that was her wedding-ring—and she had always been fond of wearing rings. He noted, involuntarily, that in her agitation the white tulle at her bosom had been disturbed into pretty disarray, and that there was neither brooch nor necklace at her breast or throat.

"If you stay, I am going to stay too," she declared in an almost passionate voice, and she spoke with deliberation and a look which left no way open to doubt. She was now a valiant little figure making a fight for happiness.

"I can't prevent that," he responded stubbornly.

She made a quick, appealing motion of her hands. "Would you prevent it? Aren't you glad to see me? Don't you love me any more? You used to love me. In spite of all, you used to love me. Even though you hated my money, and I hated your gambling—your betting on horses. You used to love me—I

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was sure you did then. Don't you love me now, Shiel?"

A gloomy look passed over his face. Memory of other days was admonishing him. "What is the good of one loving when the other doesn't? And, anyhow, I made up my mind five years ago that I would not live on my wife. I haven't done so, and I don't mean to do so. I don't mean to take a penny of your money. I should curse it to damnation if I was living on it. I'm not, and I don't mean to do so."

"Then I'll stay here and work too, without it," she urged, with a light in her eyes which they had never known.

He laughed mirthlessly. "What could you do—you never did a day's work in your life!"

"You could teach me how, Shiel."

His jaw jerked in a way it had when he was incredulous. "You used to say I was only—mark you, *only* a dreamer and a sportsman. Well, I'm no longer a dreamer and a sportsman; I'm a practical man. I've done with dreaming and sportsmanship. I can look at a situation as it is, and——"

"You are dreaming—but yes, you are dreaming still," she interjected. "And you are a sportsman still, but it is the sport of a dreamer, and a mad dreamer too. Shiel, in spite of all my faults in the past, I come to you, to stay with you, to live on what you earn if you like, if it's only a loaf of bread a day. I—I don't care about my money. I don't care about the luxuries which money can buy; I can do without them if I have you. Am I not to stay, and won't you—won't you kiss me, Shiel?"

She came close to him—came round the table till she stood within a few feet of him.

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There was one trembling instant when he would have taken her hungrily into his arms, but as if some evil spirit interposed with malign purpose, there came the sound of feet on the gravel outside, and the figure of a man darkened the doorway. It was Augustus Burlingame, whose face as he saw Mona Crozier took on an ironical smile.

"Yes—what do you want?" inquired Crozier quietly.

"A few words with Mr. Crozier on business, if he is not too much occupied?"

"What business?"

"I am acting for Messrs. Bradley, Willingden, Baxter, & Simmons."

The cloud darkened on Crozier's face. His lips tightened, his face hardened. "I will see you in a moment—wait outside, please," he added, as Burlingame made as though to step inside. "Wait at the gate," he added quietly, but with undisguised contempt.

The moment of moments for Mona and himself had passed. All the bitterness of defeat was on him again. All the humiliation of undeserved failure to accomplish what had been the dear desire of five years bore down his spirit now. Suddenly he had a suspicion that his wife had received information of his whereabouts from this very man, Burlingame. Had not the Young Doctor said that Burlingame had written to lawyers in the old land to get information concerning him? Was it not more than likely that he had given his wife the knowledge which had brought her here?

When Burlingame had disappeared he turned to Mona. "Who told you I was here? Who wrote to you?" he asked darkly. The light had died away from his face. It was ascetic in its lonely gravity now.

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"Your doctor cabled to Castlegarry and Miss Tynan wrote to me."

A faint flush spread over Crozier's face. "How did Miss Tynan know where to write?"

Mona had told the truth at once because she felt it was the only way. Now, however, she was in a position where she must either tell him that Kitty had opened that still sealed letter from herself to him which he had carried all these years, or else tell him an untruth. She had no right to tell him what Kitty had confided to her. There was no other way save to lie.

"How should I know? It was enough for me to get her letter," she replied.

"At Castlegarry?"

What was there to do? She must keep faith with Kitty, who had given her this sight of her husband again.

"Forwarded from Lammis," she said. "It reached me before the doctor's cable."

So it was Kitty—Kitty Tynan—who had brought his wife to this new home from which he had been trying so hard to get back to the old home. Kitty, the angel of the house.

"You wrote me a letter which drove me from home," he said heavily.

"No—no—no," she protested. "It was not that. I know it was not that. It was my money—it was that which drove you away. You have just said so."

"You wrote me a hateful letter," he persisted. "You didn't want to see me. You sent it to me by your sweet, young brother."

Her eyes flashed. "My letter did not drive you away. It couldn't have. You went because you did

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not love me. It was that and my money, not the letter, not the letter."

Somehow she had a curious feeling that the very letter which contained her bitter and hateful reproaches might save her yet. The fact that he had not opened it—well, she must see Kitty again. Her husband was in a dark mood. She must wait. She knew that her fortunate moment had passed when the rogue Burlingame appeared. She must wait for another.

"Shall I go now? You want to see that man outside. Shall I go, Shiel?" She was very pale, very quiet, steady and gentle.

"I must hear what that fellow has to say. It is business—important," he replied. "It may mean—anything—everything, or nothing."

As she left the room he had an impulse to call her back, but he conquered it.

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CHAPTER XVI

"'TWAS FOR YOUR PLEASURE YOU CAME HERE, YOU SHALL GO BACK FOR MINE"

For a moment Crozier stood looking at the closed doorway through which Mona had gone, with a look of repentant affection in his eyes; but as the thought of his own helpless insolvency and broken hopes flashed across his mind, a look of dark and harassed reflection shadowed his face. He turned to the front doorway with a savage gesture. The mutilated dignity of his manhood, the broken pride of a lifetime, the bitterness in his heart need not be held in check in dealing with the man who waited to give him a last thrust of enmity.

He left the house. Burlingame was seated on the stump of a tree which had been made into a seat.

"Come to my room if you have business with me," Crozier said sharply.

As they went, Crozier swung aside from the front door towards the corner of the house.

"The back way?" asked Burlingame with a sneer.

"The old familiar way to you," was the smarting reply. "In any case, you are not welcome in Mrs. Tynan's part of the house. My room is my own, however, and I should prefer you within four walls while doing business with you."

Burlingame's face changed colour slightly, for the tone of Crozier's voice, the grimness of his manner,

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suggested an abnormal condition. Burlingame was not a brave man physically. He had never lived the outdoor life, though he had lived so much among outdoor people. He was that rare thing in a new land, a decadent, a connoisseur in vice, a lover of opiates and of liquor. He was young enough yet not to be incapacitated by it. His face and hands were white and a little flabby, and he wore his hair rather long, which, it is said, accounts for the weakness of some men, on the assumption that long hair wastes the strength. But Burlingame quickly remembered the attitude of the lady—Crozier's wife, he was certain—and of Crozier in the dining-room a few moments before, and to his suspicious eyes it was not characteristic of a happy family party. No doubt this grimness of Crozier was due to domestic trouble and not wholly to his own presence. Still, he felt softly for the tiny pistol he always carried in his big waistcoat pocket, and it comforted him.

Beyond the corner of the house Crozier paused and took a key from his pocket. It opened a side door to his own room, seldom used, since it was always so pleasant in this happy home to go through the main living-room, which every one liked so much that, though it was not the dining-room, it was generally used as such, and though it was not the parlour, it was its frequent substitute. Opening the door, Crozier stepped aside to let Burlingame pass. It was two years since Burlingame had been in this room, and then he had entered it without invitation. His inquisitiveness had led him to explore it with no good intent when he lived in the house.

Entering now, he gave it quick scrutiny. It was clear he was looking for something in particular. He

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was, in fact, searching for signs of its occupancy by another than Shiel Crozier—tokens of a woman's presence. There was, however, no sign at all of that, though there were signs of a woman's care and attention in a number of little things—homelike, solicitous, perhaps affectionate care and attention. Certainly the spotless pillows, the pretty curtains, the pincushion, and charmingly valanced bed and shelves, cheap though the material was, showed a woman's very friendly care. When he lived in that house there were no such little attentions paid to him! It was his experience that where such attentions went something else went with them. A sensualist himself, it was not conceivable to him that men and women could be under the same roof without "passages of sympathetic friendship and tokens of affinity." That was a phrase he had frequently used when pursuing his own sort of happiness.

His swift scrutiny showed that Crozier's wife had no habitation here, and that gave him his cue for what the French call "the reconstruction of the crime." It certainly was clear that, as he had suggested at the Logan Trial, there was serious trouble in the Crozier family of two, and the offender must naturally be the man who had flown, not the woman who had stayed. Here was circumstantial evidence.

His suggestive glance, the look in his eyes, did not escape Crozier, who read it all aright; and a primitive expression of natural antipathy passed across his mediæval face, making it almost inquisitorial.

"Will you care to sit?" he said, however, with the courtesy he could never avoid; and he pointed to a chair beside the little table in the centre of the room.

As Burlingame sat down he noticed on the table a

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crumpled handkerchief. It had lettering in the corner. He spread it out slightly with his fingers, as though abstractedly thinking of what he was about to say. The initial in the corner was *K*. Kitty had left it on the table while she was talking to Mrs. Crozier a half-hour before. Whatever Burlingame actually thought or believed, he could not now resist picking up the handkerchief and looking at it with a mocking smile. It was too good a chance to waste. He still hugged to his evil heart the humiliating remembrance of his expulsion from this house, the share Crozier had had in it, and the things which Crozier had said to him then. He had his enemy now between the upper and the nether mill-stones, and he meant to grind him to the flour of utter abasement. It was clear that the arrival of Mrs. Crozier had brought him no relief, for Crozier's face was not that of a man who had found and opened a casket of good fortune.

"Rather dangerous that, in the bedroom of a family man," he said, picking up the handkerchief and looking suggestively from the lettering in the corner to Crozier. He laid it down again, smiling detestably.

Crozier calmly picked up the handkerchief, saw the lettering, then went quietly to the door of the room and called Mrs. Tynan's name. Presently she appeared. Crozier beckoned her into the room. When she entered, he closed the door behind her.

"Mrs. Tynan," he said, "this fellow found your daughter's handkerchief on my table, and he has said regarding it, 'Rather dangerous that, in the bedroom of a family man.' What would you like me to do with him?"

Mrs. Tynan walked up to Burlingame with the look of a woman of the Commune and said: "If I had

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a son I would disown him if he didn't mangle you till your wife would never know you again, you loathesome thing. There isn't a man or woman in Askatoon who'd believe your sickening slanders, for every one knows what you are. How dare you enter this house? If the men of Askatoon had any manhood in them they would tar-and-feather you. My girl is as good as any girl that ever lived, and you know it. Now go out of here—now!"

Crozier intervened quietly. "Mrs. Tynan, I asked him in here because it is my room. I have some business with him. When it is over, then he shall go, and we will fumigate the place. As for the tar-and-feathers, you might leave that to me. I think I can arrange it."

"I'll turn the hose on him as he goes out, if you don't mind," the irate mother exclaimed as she left the room.

Crozier nodded. "Well, that would be appropriate, Mrs. Tynan, but it wouldn't cleanse him. He is the original leopard whose spots are there for ever."

By this time Burlingame was on his feet, and a look of craft and fear and ugly meaning was in his face. Morally he was a coward, physically he was a coward, but he had in his pocket a weapon which gave him a feeling of superiority in the situation; and after a night of extreme self-indulgence he was in a state of irritation of the nerves which gave him what the searchers after excuses for ungoverned instincts and acts call "brain-storms." He had had sense enough to know that his amorous escapades would get him into trouble one day, and he had always carried the little pistol which was now so convenient to his hand. It gave him a fictitious courage which he

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would not have had unarmed against almost any man —or woman—in Askatoon.

"You get a woman to do your fighting for you," he said hatefully. "You have to drag her in. It was you I meant to challenge, not the poor girl young enough to be your daughter." His hand went to his waistcoat pocket. Crozier saw and understood.

Suddenly Crozier's eyes blazed. The abnormal in him—the Celtic strain always at variance with the normal, an almost ultra-natural attendant of it—awoke like a tempest in the tropics. His face became transformed, alive with a passion uncanny in its recklessness and purpose. It was a brain-storm indeed, but it had behind it a normal power, a moral force which was not to be resisted.

"None of your sickly melodrama here. Take out of your pocket the pistol you carry and give it to me," Crozier growled. "You are not to be trusted. The habit of thinking you would shoot somebody some time—somebody you had injured—might become too much for you to-day, and then I should have to kill you, and for your wife's sake I don't want to do that. I always feel sorry for a woman with a husband like you. You could never shoot me. You couldn't be quick enough, but you might try. Then I should end you, and there'd be another trial; but the lawyer who defended me would not have to cross-examine any witness about your character. It is too well-known, Burlingame. Out with it—the pistol!" he added, standing menacingly over the other.

In a kind of stupor, under the storm that was breaking above him, Burlingame slowly drew out of a capacious waistcoat pocket a tiny but powerful pistol of the most modern make.

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"Put it in my hand," insisted Crozier, his eyes on the other's.

The flabby hand laid the weapon in Crozier's lean and strenuous fingers. Crozier calmly withdrew the cartridges and then tossed the weapon back on the table.

"Now we have equality of opportunity," he remarked quietly. "If you think you would like to repeat any slander that's slid off your foul tongue, do it now; and in a moment or two Mrs. Tynan can turn the hose on the floor of this room."

"I want to get to business," said Burlingame sullenly, as he took from his pocket a paper.

Crozier nodded. "I can imagine your haste," he remarked. "You need all the fees you can get to pay Belle Bingley's bills."

Burlingame did not wince. He made no reply to the challenge that he was the chief supporter of a certain wanton thereabouts.

"The time for your option to take ten thousand dollars' worth of shares in the syndicate is up," he said; "and I am instructed to inform you that Messrs. Bradley, Willingden, Baxter, & Simmons propose to take over your unpaid shares and to complete the transaction without you."

"Who informed Messrs. Bradley, Willingden, Baxter, & Simmons that I am not prepared to pay for my shares?" asked Crozier sharply.

"The time is up," surlily replied Burlingame. "It is assumed you can't take up your shares, and that you don't want to do so. The time us up," he added emphatically, and he tapped the paper spread before him on the table.

Crozier's eyes half closed in an access of stubborn-

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ness and hatred. "You are not to assume anything whatever," he declared. "You are to accommodate yourself to actual facts. The time is not up. It is not up till midnight, and any action taken before then on any other assumption will give grounds for damages."

Crozier spoke without passion and with a cold-blooded insistence not lost on Burlingame. Taking down a calendar from the wall, he laid it beside the paper on the table before the too eager lawyer. "Examine the dates," he said. "At twelve o'clock to-night Messrs. Bradley, Willingden, Baxter, & Simmons are free to act, if the money is not at the disposal of the syndicate by then; but till then my option is indefeasible. Does that meet the case or not?"

"It meets the case," said Burlingame in a morose voice, rising. "If you can produce the money before the stroke of midnight, why can't you produce it now? What's the use of bluffing! It can't do any good in the end. Your credit——"

"My credit has been stopped by your friends," interrupted Crozier, "but my resources are current."

"Midnight is not far off," viciously remarked Burlingame as he made for the door.

Crozier intercepted him. "One word with you on another business before you go," he said. "The tar-and-feathers for which Mrs. Tynan asks will be yours at any moment I raise my hand in Askatoon. There are enough women alone who would do it."

"Talk of that after midnight," sneered Burlingame desperately as the door was opened for him by Crozier.

"Better not go out by the front gate," remarked Crozier scornfully. "Mrs. Tynan is a woman of her word, and the hose is handy."

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A moment later, with contemptuous satisfaction, he saw Burlingame climb the picket-fence at the side of the house.

Turning back into the room, he threw up his arms. "Midnight—midnight—my God, where am I to get the money! I must—I must have it . . . It's the only way back."

Sitting down at the table, he dropped his head into his hands and shut his eyes in utter dejection.

"Mona—by Heaven, no, I'll never take it from her!" he said once, and clenched his hands at his temples and sat on and on unmoving.

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CHAPTER XVII

WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT IT?

For a full half-hour Crozier sat buried in dark reflection, then he slowly raised his head, and for a minute looked round dazedly. His absorption had been so great that for a moment he was like one who had awakened upon unfamiliar things. As when in a dream of the night the history of years will flash past like a ray of light, so for the bad half-hour in which Crozier had given himself up to despair, his mind had travelled through an incongruous series of incidents of his past life, and had also revealed pictures of solution after solution of his present troubles.

He had that gift of visualization which makes life an endless procession of pictures which allure, or which wear the nature into premature old age. The last picture flashing before his eyes, as he sat there alone, was of himself and his elder brother, Garnett, now master of Castlegarry, racing ponies to reach the lodge-gates before they closed for the night, after a day of disobedience and truancy. He remembered how Garnett had given him the better pony of the two, so that the younger brother, who would be more heavily punished if they were locked out, should have the better chance. Garnett, if odd in manner and character, had always been a true sportsman though not a lover of sport.

If—if—why had he never thought of Garnett? Garnett could help him, and he would do so. He

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would let Garnett stand in with him—take one-third of his profits from the syndicate. Yes, he must ask Garnett to see him through. Then it was that he lifted his head from his hands, and his mind awakened out of a dream as real as though he had actually been asleep. Garnett—alas! Garnett was thousands of miles away, and he had not heard from him for five years. Still, he knew the master of Castlegarry was alive, for he had seen him mentioned in a chance number of *The Morning Post* lately come to his hands. What avail! Garnett was at Castlegarry, and at midnight his chance of fortune and a new life would be gone. Then, penniless, he would have to face Mona again; and what would come of that he could not see, would not try to see. There was an alternative he would not attempt to face until after midnight, when this crisis in his life would be over. Beyond midnight was a darkness which he would not now try to pierce. As his eyes again became used to his surroundings, a look of determination, the determination of the true gambler, came into his face. The real gambler never throws up the sponge till all is gone; never gives up till after the last toss of the last penny of cash or credit; for he has seen such innumerable times the thing come right and good fortune extend a friendly hand with the last hazard of all.

Suddenly he remembered—saw—a scene in the gambling rooms at Monte Carlo on the only visit he had ever paid to the place. He had played constantly, and had won more or less each day. Then his fortune turned and he lost and lost each day. At last, one evening, he walked up to a table and said to the croupier, "When was zero up last?" The croupier answered, "Not for an hour." Forthwith he began to stake on

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zero and on nothing else. For two hours he put his louis at each turn of the wheel on the Lonely Nought. For two hours he lost. Increasing his stake, which had begun at five francs and had risen at length to five louis, he still coaxed the sardonic deity. Finally midnight came, and he was the only person playing at the table. All others had gone or had ceased to play. These stayed to watch the "mad Inglesi," as a foreigner called him, knocking his head against the footstool of an unresponsive god of chance. The croupiers watched also with somewhat disdainful, somewhat pitying interest, this last representative of a class who have an insane notion that the law of chances is in their favour if they can but stay the course. And how often had they seen the stubborn challenger of a black demon, who would not appear according to the law of chances, leave the table ruined for ever!

Smiling, Crozier had played on till he had but ten louis left. Counting them over with cheerful exactness, he rose up, lit a cigarette, placed the ten louis on the fatal spot with cynical precision, and with a gay smile kissed his hand to the refractory Nothing and said, "You've got it all, Zero—good-night! Good-night, Zero!" Then he had buttoned his coat and turned away to seek the cool air of the Mediterranean. He had gone but a step or two, his head half gaily turned to the table where the dwindling onlookers stood watching the wheel spin round, when suddenly the croupier's cry of "Zero!" fell upon his ears.

With cheerful nonchalance he had come back to the table and picked up the many louis he had won—won by his last throw and with his last available coin.

As the scene passed before him now he got to his feet and, with that look of the visionary in his eyes,

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which those only know who have watched the born gamester, said, "I'll back my hand till the last throw."

Then it was, as his eyes gazed in front of him dreamily, he saw the card on his mirror bearing the words, "Courage, soldier!"

With a deepening flame in his eyes he went over and gazed at it. At length he reached out and touched the writing with a caressing finger.

"Kitty—Kitty, how great you are!" he said. Then as he turned to the outer door a softness came into his face, stole up into his brilliant eyes and dimmed them with a tear. "What a hand to hold in the dark—the dark of life!" he said aloud. "Courage, soldier!" he added, as he opened the door by which he had entered, through which Burlingame had gone, and strode away towards the town of Askatoon, feeling somehow in his heart that before midnight his luck would turn.

From the dining-room Kitty had watched him go. "Courage, soldier!" she whispered after him, and she laughed; but almost immediately she threw her head up with a gasping sigh, and when it was lowered again two tears were stealing down her cheeks.

With an effort she conquered herself, wiped away the tears, and said aloud, with a whimsical but none the less pitiful self-reproach, "Kitty—Kitty Tynan, what a fool you are!"

Entering the room Crozier had left, she went to the desk with the green-baize top, opened it, and took out the fateful letter which Mona Crozier had written to her husband five years ago. Putting it into her pocket she returned to the dining-room. She stood there for a moment with her chin in her hands and deep reflection in her eyes, and then, going to the door

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of her mother's sitting-room, she opened it and beckoned. A moment later Mrs. Crozier and the Young Doctor entered the dining-room and sat down at a motion from her. Presently she said:

"Mrs. Crozier, I have here the letter your husband received from you five years ago in London."

Mrs. Crozier flushed. She had been masterful by nature. and she had had her way very much in life. To be dominated in the most intimate things of her life by this girl was not easy to be borne; but she realised that Kitty had been a friend indeed, even if not conventional. In response to Kitty's remark now she inclined her head.

"Well, you have told us that you and your husband haven't made it up. That is so, isn't it?" Kitty continued.

"If you wish to put it that way," answered Mona, stiffening a little in spite of herself.

"P'r'aps I don't put it very well, but it is the stony fact, isn't it, Mrs. Crozier?"

Mona hesitated a moment, then answered: "He is very upset concerning the land syndicate, and he has a quixotic idea that he cannot take money from me to help him carry it through."

"I don't quite know what quixotic means," rejoined Kitty dryly. "If it wasn't understood while you lived together that what was one's was the other's, that it was all in one purse, and that you shut your eyes to the name on the purse and took as you wanted, I don't see how you could expect him, after your five years' desertion, to take money from you now."

"*My* five years' desertion!" exclaimed Mona. Surely this girl was more than reckless in her talk.

Kitty was not to be put down. "If you don't mind

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plain speaking, he was always with you, but you weren't always with him in those days. This letter showed that." She tapped it on her thumb-nail. "It was only when he had gone and you saw what you had lost, that you came back to him—in heart, I mean. Well, if you didn't go away with him when he went, and you wouldn't have gone unless he had ordered you to go—and he wouldn't do that—it's clear you deserted him, since you did that which drove him from home, and you stayed there instead of going with him. I've worked it out, and it is certain you deserted him five years ago. Desertion does't mean a sea of water between, it means an ocean of self-will and love-me-first between. If you hadn't deserted him, as this letter shows, he wouldn't have been here. I expect he told you so; and if he did, what did you say to him?"

The Young Doctor's eyes were full of decorous mirth and apprehension, for such logic and such impudence as Kitty's was like none he had ever heard. Yet it was commanding too.

Kitty caught the look in his eyes and blazed up. "Isn't what I said correct? Isn't it all true and logical? And if it is, why do you sit there looking so superior?"

The Young Doctor made a gesture of deprecating apology. "It's all true, and it's logical, too, if you stand on your head when you think it. But whether it is logical or not, it is your conclusion, and as you've taken the thing in hand to set it right, it is up to you now. We can only hold hard and wait."

With a shrug of her graceful shoulders Kitty turned again to Mrs. Crozier, who intervened hastily, saying, "I did not have a chance of saying to him all I wished. Of course he could not take my money, but there was

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his own money! I was going to tell him about that, but just then the lawyer, Mr. Burlingame——"

"They all call him 'Gus' Burlingame. He doesn't get the civility of *Mr.* here in Askatoon," interposed Kitty.

Mona made an impatient gesture. "If you will listen, I want to tell you about Mr. Crozier's money. He thinks he has no money, but he has. He has a good deal."

She paused, and the Young Doctor and Kitty leaned forward eagerly. "Well, but go on," said Kitty. "If he has money he must have it to-day, and now. Certainly he doesn't know of it. He thinks he is broke,—dead broke,—and there'd be a hundred and fifty thousand dollars for him if he could put up ten thousand dollars to-night. If I were you I wouldn't hide it from him any longer."

Mona got to her feet in anger. "If you would give me a chance to explain, I would do so," she said, her lips trembling. "Unfortunately, I am in your hands, but please give me credit for some intelligence—and some heart. In any case I shall not be bullied."

The Young Doctor almost laughed outright, despite the danger of the situation. He was not prepared for Kitty's reply and the impulsive act that marched with it. In an instant Kitty had caught Mona Crozier's hand and pressed it warmly. "I was only doing what I've seen lawyers do," she said eagerly. "I've got something that I want you to do, and I've been trying to work up to it. That's all. I'm not as mean and bad mannered as you think me. I really do care what happens to him—to you both," she hastened to add.

Struggling to keep back her tears, and in a low voice, Mona rejoined: "I meant to have told him

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what I'm going to tell you now. I couldn't say anything about the money belonging to him till I had told him how it came to be his."

After a moment' pause she continued: "He told you all about the race which Flamingo lost, and about that letter." She pointed to the letter which Kitty still carried in her hand. "Well, that letter was written under the sting of bitter disappointment. I was vain. I was young. I did not understand as I do now. If you were not such good friends—of his—I could not tell you this. It seemed to me that by breaking his pledge he showed he did not care for me; that he thought he could break a sacred pledge to me, and it didn't matter. I thought it was treating me lightly—to do it so soon after the pledge was given. I was indignant. I felt we weren't as we might be, and I felt, too, that I must be at fault; but I was so proud that I didn't want to admit it, I suppose, when he did give me a grievance. It was all so mixed. I was shocked at his breaking his pledge, I was so vexed that our marriage hadn't been the success it might have been, and I think I was a little mad."

"That is not the monopoly of only one of your sex," interposed the Young Doctor dryly. "If I were you I wouldn't apologise for it. You speak to a sister in like distress."

Kitty's eyes flamed up, but she turned her head, as though some licensed libertine of speech had had his say, and looked with friendly eyes at Mona. "Yes, yes—please go on," she urged.

"When I wrote that letter I had forgotten what I had done the day before the race. I had gone into my husband's room to find some things I needed from the drawer of his dressing-table; and far at the back of

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a drawer I found a crumpled-up roll of ten-pound notes. It was fifty pounds altogether. I took the notes——"

She paused a moment, and the room became very still. Both her listeners were sure that they were nearing a thing of deep importance.

In a lower voice Mona continued: "I don't know what possessed me, but perhaps it was that the things he did of which I disapproved most had got a hold on me in spite of myself. I said to myself: 'I am going to the Derby. I will take the fifty pounds, and I'll put it on a horse for Shiel.' He had talked so much to my brother about Flamingo, and I had seen him go wrong so often, that I had a feeling if I put it on a horse that Shiel particularly banned, it would probably win. He had been wrong nearly every time for two years. It was his money, and if it won, it would make him happy; and if it didn't win, well, he didn't know the money existed—I was sure of that; and, anyhow, I could replace it. I put it on a horse he condemned utterly, but of which one or two people spoke well. You know what happened to Flamingo. While at Epsom I heard from friends that Shiel was present at the race, though he had said he would not go. Later I learned that he had lost heavily. Then I saw him in the distance paying out money and giving bills to the bookmakers. It made me very angry. I don't think I was quite sane. Most women are like that at times."

"As I said," remarked the Young Doctor, his face mirthfully alive. Here was a situation indeed.

"So I wrote him that letter," Mona went on. "I had forgotten all about the money I put on the outsider which won the race. As you know, I was called

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away to my sick sister that evening, and the money I won with Shiel's fifty pounds was not paid to me till after Shiel had gone."

"How much was it?" asked Kitty breathlessly.

"Four thousand pounds."

Kitty exclaimed so loudly that she smothered her mouth with a hand. "Why, he only needs for the syndicate two thousand pounds—ten thousand dollars," she said excitedly. "But what's the good of it, if he can't lay his hand on it by midnight to-night!"

"He can do so," was Mona's quick reply. "I was going to tell him that, but the lawyer came, and——"

Kitty sprang up and down in excitement. "I had a plan. It might have worked without this. It was the only way then. But this makes it sure—yes, most beautifully sure. It shows that the thing to do is to follow your convictions. You say you actually have the money, Mrs. Crozier?"

Mona took from her pocket an envelope, and out of it she drew four Bank of England notes. "Here it is—here are four one-thousand-pound notes. I had it paid to me that way five years ago, and here—here it is," she added, with almost a touch of hysteria in her voice, for the excitement of it all acted on her like an electric storm.

"Well, we'll get to work at once," declared Kitty, looking at the notes admiringly, then taking them from Mona and smoothing them out with tender firmness. "It's just the luck of the wide world, as my father used to say. It actually is. Now you see," she continued, "it's like this. That letter you wrote him"—she addressed herself to Mona—"it has to be changed. You have got to rewrite it, and you must put into it these four bank-notes. Then when you see

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him again you must have that letter opened at exactly the right moment, and—oh, I wonder if you will do it exactly right!" she added dubiously to Mona. "You don't play your game very well, and it's just possible that, even now, with all the cards in your hands, you will throw them away as you did in the past. I wish that——"

Seeing Mona's agitation changing to choler, the Young Doctor intervened. He did not know Kitty was purposely stinging Crozier's unhappy little consort, so that she should be put upon her mettle to do the thing without bungling.

"You can trust Mrs. Crozier to act carefully; but what exactly do you mean? I judge that Mrs. Crozier does not see more distinctly than I do," he remarked inquiringly to Kitty, and with admonishment in tone and emphasis.

"No, I do not understand quite—will you explain?" interposed Mona with inner resentment at being managed, but feeling that she could not do without Kitty even if she would.

"As I said," continued Kitty, "I will open that letter, and you will put in another letter and these bank-notes; and when he repeats what he said about the way you felt and wrote when he broke his pledge, you can blaze up and tell him to open the letter. Then he will be so sorry that he'll get down on his knees, and you will be happy ever after."

"But it will be a fraud, and dishonest and dishonourable," protested Mona.

Kitty almost sniffed, but she was too agitated to be scornful. "Just leave that to me, please. It won't make me a bit more dishonourable to open the letter again—I've opened it once, and I don't feel any the

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worse for it. I have no conscience, and things don't weigh on my mind at all. I'm a light-minded person."

Looking closely at her, the Young Doctor got a still further insight into the mind and soul of this prairie girl, who used a lid of irony to cover a well of deep feeling. Things did not weigh on her mind! He was sure that pain to the wife of Shiel Crozier would be mortal torture to Kitty Tynan.

"But I felt exactly what I wrote that Derby Day when he broke his pledge, and he ought to know me exactly as I was," urged Mona. "I don't want to deceive him, to appear a bit better than I am."

"Oh, you'd rather lose him!" said Kitty almost savagely. "Knowing how hard it is to keep a man under the best circumstances, you'd willingly make the circumstances as bad as they can be—is that it? Besides, weren't you sorry afterwards that you wrote that letter?"

"Yes, yes, desperately sorry."

"And you wished often that your real self had written on Derby Day and not the scratch-cat you were then?"

Mona flushed, but answered bravely, "Yes, a thousand times."

"What business had you to show him your cat-self, your unreal, not your real self on Derby Day five years ago? Wasn't it your duty to show him your real self?"

Mona nodded helplessly. "Yes, I know it was."

"Then isn't it your duty to see that your real self speaks in that letter now?"

"I want him to know me exactly as I am, and then——"

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Kitty made a passionate gesture. Was ever such an uncomprehending woman as this diamond-button of a wife?

"And then you would be unhappy ever after instead of being happy ever after. What is the good of prejudicing your husband against you by telling the unnecessary truth. He is desperate, and besides, he has been away from you for five years, and we all change somehow—particularly men, when there are so many women in the world, and very pretty women of all ages and kinds and colours and tastes, and dazzling, deceitful hussies too. It isn't wise for any woman to let her husband or any one at all see her exactly as she is; and only the silly ones do it. They tell what they think is the truth about their own wickedness, and it isn't the truth at all, because I suppose women don't know how to tell the exact truth; and they can be just as unfair to themselves as they are to others. Besides, haven't you *any* sense of humour, Mrs. Crozier? It's as good as a play, this. Just think: after five years of desertion, and trouble without end, and it all put right by a little sleight-of-hand. Shall I open it?"

She held the letter up. Mona nodded almost eagerly now, for come of a subtle, social world far away, she still was no match for the subtlety of the wilds—or was it the cunning the wild things know?

Kitty left the room, but in a moment afterwards returned with the letter open. "The kettle on the hob is the friend of the family," she said gaily. "Here it is all ready for what there is to do. You go and keep watch for Mr. Crozier," she added to the Young Doctor. "He won't be gone long, I should think, and we don't want him bursting in on us before I've got

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that letter safe back into his desk. If he comes, you keep him busy for a moment. When we're quite ready I'll come to the front door, and then you will know it is all right."

"I'm to go while you make up your prescription—all right!" said the Young Doctor, and with a wave of the hand he left the room.

Instantly Kitty brought a lead pencil and paper. "Now sit down and write to him, Mrs. Crozier," she said briskly. "Use discretion; don't gush; slap his face a little for breaking his pledge, and afterwards tell him that you did at the Derby what you had abused him for doing. Then explain to him about this four thousand pounds—twenty thousand dollars—my, what a lot of money, and all got in one day! Tell him that it was all won by his own cash. It's as easy as can be, and it will be a certainty now."

So saying, she lit a match. "You hold this wicked old catfish letter into the flame, please, Mrs. Crozier, and keep praying all the time, and please remember that 'our little hands were never made to tear each other's eyes.'"

Mona's small fingers were trembling as she held the fateful letter into the flame, and then in silence both watched it burn to a cinder. A faint, hopeful smile was on Mona's face now.

"What isn't never was to those that never knew," said Kitty briskly, and pushed a chair up to the table. "Now sit down and write, please."

Mona sat down. Taking up a sheet of notepaper she looked at it dubiously.

"Oh, what a fool I am!" said Kitty, understanding the look. "And that's what every criminal does—he forgets something. I forgot the notepaper. Of course

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you can't use that notepaper. Of course not. He'd know it in a minute. Besides, the sheet we burned had an engraved address on it. I never thought of that—good gracious!"

"Wait—wait," said Mona, her face lighting. "I may have some sheets in my writing-case. It's only a chance, but there were some loose sheets in it when I left home. I'll go and see."

While she was gone to her bedroom Kitty stood still in the middle of the room lost in reflection, as completely absorbed as though she was seeing things thousands of miles away. In truth, she was seeing things millions of miles away; she was seeing a Promised Land. It was a gift of hers, or a penalty of her life, perhaps, that she could lose herself in reverie at a moment's notice—a reverie as complete as though she was subtracted from life's realities. Now, as she looked out of the door, far over the prairie to a tiny group of pine-trees in the vanishing distance, lines she once read floated through her mind:

> "Away and beyond the point of pines,
> In a pleasant land where the glad grapes be,
> Purple and pendent on verdant vines,
> I know that my fate is awaiting me."

What fate was to be hers? There was no joy in her eyes as she gazed. Mrs. Crozier was beside the table again before she roused herself from her trance.

"I've got it—just two sheets, two solitary sheets," said Mona in triumph. "How long they have been in my case I don't know. It is almost uncanny they should be there just when they're most needed."

"Providential, we should say out here," was Kitty's response. "Begin, please. Be sure you have the right date. It was——"

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Mona had already written the date, and she interrupted Kitty with the words, "As though I could forget it!" All at once Kitty put a restraining hand on her arm.

"Wait—wait, you mustn't write on that paper yet. Suppose you didn't write the real wise thing—and only two sheets of paper and so much to say?"

"How right you always are!" said Mona, and took up one of the blank sheets which Kitty had just brought her.

Then she began to write. For a minute she wrote swiftly, nervously, and had nearly finished a page when Kitty said to her, "I think I had better see what you have written. I don't think you are the best judge. You see, I have known him better than you for the last five years, and I *am* the best judge—please, I mean it in the rightest, kindest way," she added, as she saw Mona shrink. It was like hurting a child, and she loved children—so much. She had always a vision of children at her knee.

Silently Mrs. Crozier pushed the sheets towards her. Kitty read the page with a strange, eager look in her eyes. "Yes, that's right as far as it goes," she said. "It doesn't gush. It's natural. It's you as you are now, not as you were then, of course."

Again Mona bent over the paper and wrote till she had completed a page. Then Kitty looked over her shoulder and read what had been written. "No, no, no, that won't do," she exclaimed. "That won't do at all. It isn't in the way that will accomplish what we want. You've gone quite, quite wrong. I'll do it. I'll dictate it to you. I know exactly what to say, and we mustn't make any mistake. Write, please—you must."

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Mona scratched out what had been written without a word. "I am waiting," she said submissively.

"All right. Now we go on. Write. I'll dictate."

"'And look here, dearest,'" she began, but Mona stopped her.

"We do not say 'look here' in England. I would have said 'and see.'"

"'And see—dearest,'" corrected Kitty, with an accent on the last word, "'while I was mad at you for the moment for breaking your promise——'"

"In England we don't say 'mad' in that connection," Mona again interrupted. "We say 'angry' or 'annoyed' or 'vexed.'" There was real distress in her tone.

"Now I'll tell you what to do," said Kitty cheerfully. "I'll speak it, and you write it my way of thinking, and then when we've finished you will take out of the letter any words that are not pure, noble, classic English. I know what you mean, and you are quite right. Mr. Crozier never says 'look here' or 'mad,' and he speaks better than any one I ever heard. Now, we certainly must get on."

After an instant she began again.

"——While I was angry at you a moment for breaking your promise, I cannot reproach you for it, because I, too, bet on the Derby, but I bet on a horse that you had said as much against as you could. I did it because you had very bad luck all this year and lost, and also last year, and I thought——"

For several minutes, with greater deliberation than was usual with her, Kitty dictated, and at the end of the letter she said, "I am, dearest, your——"

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Here Mona sharply interrupted her. "If you don't mind I will say that myself in my own way," she said, flushing.

"Oh, I forgot for the moment that I was speaking for you!" responded Kitty, with a lurking, undermeaning in her voice. "I threw myself into it so. Do you think I've done the thing right?" she added.

With a direct, honest friendliness Mona looked into Kitty eyes. "You have said the exact right thing as to meaning, I am sure, and I can change an occasional word here and there to make it all conventional English."

Kitty nodded. "Don't lose a minute in copying it. We must get the letter back in his desk as soon as possible."

As Mona wrote, Kitty sat with the envelope in her hand, alternately looking at it and into the distance beyond the point of pines. She was certain that she had found the solution of the troubles of Shiel and Mona Crozier, for Crozier would now have his fortune, and the return to his wife was a matter of course. Was she altogether sure? But yes, she was altogether sure. She remembered, with a sudden, swift plunge of blood in her veins, that early dawn when she bent over him as he lay beneath the tree, and as she kissed him in his sleep he had murmured, "My darling!" That had not been for her, though it had been her kiss which had stirred his dreaming soul to say the words. If they had only been meant for her, then—oh, then life would be so much easier in the future! If—if she could only kiss him again and he would wake and say——

She got to her feet with an involuntary exclamation. For an instant she had been lost in a world of her own, a world of the impossible.

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"I almost thought I heard a step in the other room," she said in explanation to Mona. Going to the door of Crozier's room, she appeared to listen for a moment, and then she opened it.

"No, it is all right," she said.

In another few minutes Mona had finished the letter. "Do you wish to read it again?" she asked Kitty, but not handing it to her.

"No, I leave the words to you. It was the right meaning I wanted in it," she replied.

Suddenly Mona came to her and laid a hand on her arm. "You are wonderful—a wonderful, wise, beloved girl," she said, and there were tears in her eyes.

Kitty gave the tiny fingers a spasmodic clasp, and said: "Quick, we must get them in!" She put the banknotes inside the sheets of paper, then hastily placed both in the envelope and sealed the envelope again.

"It's just a tiny bit damp with the steam yet, but it will be all right in five minutes. How soiled the envelope is!" Kitty added. "Five years in and out of the desk, in and out of his pocket—but all so nice and unsoiled and sweet and bonny inside," she added. "To say nothing of the bawbees, as Mr. Crozier calls money. Well, we are ready. It all depends on you now, Mrs. Crozier."

"No, not all."

"He used to be afraid of you; now you are afraid of him," said Kitty, as though stating a commonplace.

There was no more shrewishness left in the little woman to meet this chastisement. The forces against her were too many. Loneliness and the long struggle

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to face the world without her man; the determination of this masterful young woman who had been so long a part of her husband's life; and, more than all, a new feeling altogether—love, and the dependence a woman feels, the longing to find rest in strong arms, which comes with the first revelation of love, had conquered what Kitty had called her "bossiness." She was now tremulous before the crisis which she must presently face. Pride in her fortune, in her independence, had died down in her. She no longer thought of herself as a woman especially endowed and privileged. She took her fortune now like a man; for she had been taught that a man could set her aside just because she had money, could desert her to be independent of it. It had been a revelation to her, and she was chastened of all the termagancy visible and invisible in her. She stood now before Kitty of "a humble and a contrite heart," and made no reply at all to the implied challenge. Kitty, instantly sorry for what she had said, let it go at that. She was only now aware of how deeply her arrows had gone home.

As they stood silent there was a click at the gate. Kitty ran into Crozier's room, thrust the letter into its pigeonhole in the desk, and in a moment was back again. In the garden the Young Doctor was holding Crozier in conversation, but watching the front door. So soon, however, as Kitty had shown herself, as she had promised, at the front door and then vanished, he turned Crozier towards the house again by an adroit word, and left him at the door-step.

Seeing who was inside the room Crozier hesitated, and his long face, with paleness added to its asceticism, took on a look which could have given no hope of happiness to Mona. It went to her heart as no look

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of his had ever gone. Suddenly she had a revelation of how little she had known of what he was, or what any man was or could be, or of those springs of nature lying far below the outer lives which move in orbits of sheltering convention. It is because some men and women are so sheltered from the storms of life by wealth and comfort that these piercing agonies which strike down to the uttermost depths so seldom reach them.

Shiel half turned away, not sullen, not morose, but with a strange apathy settled on him. He had once heard a man say, "I feel as though I wanted to crawl into a hole and die." That was the way he felt now, for to be beaten in the game which you have played like a man yourself and have been fouled into an unchallenged defeat, without the voice of the umpire, is a fate which has smothered the soul of better men than Crozier.

Mona's voice stopped him. "Do not go, Shiel," she urged gently. "No, you must not go. I want fair-play from you, if nothing else. You must play the game with me. I want justice. I have to say some things I had no chance to say before, and I want to hear some things I have a right to hear. Indeed, you must play the game."

He drew himself up. Not to be a sportsman, not to play the game—to accuse him of this would have brought him back from the edge of the grave.

"I'm not fit to-day. Let it be to-morrow, Mona," was his hesitating reply; but he did not leave the doorway.

She shook her head and made a swift little childlike gesture towards him. "We are sure of to-day; we are not sure of to-morrow. One or the other of us

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might not be here to-morrow. Let us do to-day the thing that belongs to to-day."

That note struck home, for indeed the black spirit which whispers to men in their most despairing hours to end it all had whispered to him.

"Let us do to-day the thing that belongs to to-day," she had just said, and, strange to say, there shot into his mind words that belonged to the days when he went to church at Castlegarry and thought of a thousand things other than prayer or praise, but yet heard with the acute ears of the young, and remembered with the persistent memory of youth. *"For the night cometh when no man can work,"* were the words which came to him. He shuddered slightly. Suppose that this indeed was the beginning of the night! As she said, he must play the game—play it as Crozier of Lammis would have played it.

He stepped inside the room. "Let it be to-day," he said.

"We may be interrupted here," she replied. Courage came to her. "Let us talk in your own room," she added, and going over she opened the door of it and walked in. The matured modesty of a lost five years did not cloak her actions now. She was a woman fighting for happiness, and she had been so beaten by the rods of scorn, so smothered by the dust of humiliation, that there had come to her the courage of those who would rather die fighting than in the lethargy of despair.

It was like her old self to take the initiative, but she did it now in so different a way—without masterfulness or assumption. It was rather like saying, "I will do what I know you wish me to do; I will lay all reserve aside for your sake; I will be bold because I love you."

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He shut the door behind them and motioned her to a chair.

"No, I will not sit," she said. "That is too formal. You ask any stranger to sit. I am at home here, Shiel, and I will stand."

"What was it you wanted to say, Mona?" he asked, scarcely looking at her.

"I should like to think that there was something you wished to hear," she replied. "Don't you want to know all that has happened since you left us—about me, about your brother, about your friends, about Lammis? I bought Lammis at the sale you ordered; it is still ours." She gave emphasis to "ours." "You may not want to hear all that has happened to me since you left, still I must tell you some things that you ought to know, if we are going to part again. You treated me badly. There was no reason why you should have left and placed me in the position you did."

His head came up sharply and his voice became a little hard. "I told you I was penniless, and I would not live on you, and I could do nothing in England; I had no trade or profession. If I had said good-bye to you, you would probably have offered me a ticket to Canada. As I was a pauper I preferred to go with what I had out of the wreck—just enough to bring me here. But I've earned my own living since."

"Penniless—just enough to bring you out here!" Her voice had a sound of honest amazement. "How can you say such a thing! You had my letter—you said you had my letter?"

"Yes, I had your letter," he answered. "Your thoughtful brother brought it to me. You had told him all the dear womanly things you had said or were

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going to say to your husband, and he passed them on to me with the letter."

"Never mind what he said to you, Shiel. It was what I said that mattered." She was getting bolder every minute. The comedy was playing into her hands.

"You wrote in your letter the things he said to me," he replied.

Her protest sounded indignantly real. "I said nothing in the letter I wrote you that any man would not wish to hear. Is it so unpleasant for a man who thinks he is penniless to be told that he has made the year's income of a cabinet minister?"

"I don't understand," he returned helplessly.

"You talk as though you had never read my letter."

"I never have read your letter," he replied in bewilderment.

Her face had the flush of honest anger. "You do not dare to tell me you destroyed my letter without reading it—that you destroyed all that letter contained simply because you no longer cared for your wife; because you wanted to be rid of her, wanted to vanish and never see her any more, and so go and leave no trace of yourself! You have the courage here to my face"—the comedy of the situation gained much from the mock indignation—she no longer had any compunctions—"to say that you destroyed my letter and what it contained—a small fortune it would be out here."

"I did not destroy your letter, Mona," was the embarrassed response.

"Then what did you do with it? Gave it to some one else to read—to some other woman, perhaps."

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He was really shocked and greatly pained. "Hush! You shall not say that kind of thing, Mona. I've never had anything to do with any woman but my wife since I married her."

"Then what did you do with the letter?"

"It's there," he said, pointing to the high desk with the green baize top.

"And you say you have never read it?"

"Never."

She raised her head with dainty haughtiness. "Then if you have still the same sense of honour that made you keep faith with the bookmakers—you didn't run away from them!—read it now, here in my presence. Read it, Shiel. I demand that you read it now. It is my right. You are in honour bound——"

It was the only way. She dare not give him time to question, to suspect; she must sweep him along to conviction. She was by no means sure that there wasn't a flaw in the scheme somewhere, something that would betray her; and she could hardly wait till it was over, till he had read the letter.

In a moment he was again near her with the letter in his hand.

"Yes, that's it—that's the letter," she said, with wondering and reproachful eyes. "I remember the little scratchy blot from the pen on the envelope. There it is, just as I made it five years ago. But how disgracefully soiled the envelope is! I suppose it has been tossed about in your saddle-bag, or with your old clothes, and only kept to remind you day by day that you had a wife you couldn't live with—kept as a warning never to think of her except to say, 'I hate you, Mona, because you are rich and heartless, and

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not bigger than a pinch of snuff.' That was the kind way you used to speak of her even when you were first married to her—contemptuously always in your heart, no matter what you said out loud. And the end showed it—the end showed it; you deserted her."

He was so fascinated by the picture she made of passion and incensed declamation that he did not attempt to open the letter, and he wondered why there was such a difference between the effect of her temper on him now and the effect of it those long years ago. He had no feeling of uneasiness in her presence now, no sense of irritation. In spite of her tirade, he had a feeling that it didn't matter, that she must bluster in her tiny teacup if she wanted to do so.

"Open the letter at once," she insisted. "If you don't, I will." She made as though to take the letter from him, but with a sudden twist he tore open the envelope. The bank-notes fell to the floor as he took out the sheet inside. Wondering, he stooped to pick them up.

"Four thousand pounds!" he exclaimed, examining them. "What does it mean?"

"Read," she commanded.

He devoured the letter. His eyes swam; then there rushed into them the flame which always made them illumine his mediæval face like the light from "the burning bush." He did not question or doubt, because he saw what he wished to see, which is the way of man. It all looked perfectly natural and convincing to him.

"Mona—Mona—heaven above and all the gods of hell and Hellas, what a fool, what a fool I've been!" he exclaimed. "Mona—Mona, can you forgive your idiot husband? I didn't read this letter because I

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thought it was going to slash me on the raw—on the raw flesh of my own lacerating. I simply couldn't bear to read what your brother said was in the letter. Yet I couldn't destroy it, either. It was you. I had to keep it. Mona, am I too big a fool to be your husband?"

He held out his arms with a passionate exclamation.

"I asked you to kiss me yesterday, and you wouldn't," she protested. "I tried to make you love me yesterday, and you wouldn't. When a woman gets a rebuff like that, when——"

She could not bear it any longer. With a cry of joy she was in his arms.

After a moment he said, "The best of all was, that you—you vixen, you bet on that Derby and won, and——"

"With your money, remember, Shiel."

"With my money!" he cried exultingly. "Yes, that's the best of it—the next best of it. It was your betting that was the best of all—the best thing you ever did since we married, except your coming here."

"It's in time to help you, too—with your own money, isn't it?"

He glanced at his watch. "Hours—I'm hours to the good. That crowd—that gang of thieves—that bunch of highwaymen! I've got them—got them, and got a hundred and fifty thousand dollars, too, to start again at home, at Lammis, Mona, back on the —but no, I'm not sure that I can live there now after this big life out here."

"I'm not so sure, either," Mona replied, with a light of larger understanding in her eyes. "But we'll have to go back and stop the world talking, and put things in shape before we come here to stay."

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"To stay here—do you mean that?" he asked eagerly.

"Somewhere in this big land," she replied softly; "anyhow, to stay here till I've grown up a little. I wasn't only small in body in the old days, I was small in mind, Shiel."

"Anyhow, I've done with betting and racing, Mona. I've just got time left—I'm only thirty-nine—to start and really do something with myself."

"Well, start now, dear man of Lammis. What is it you have to do before twelve o'clock to-night?"

"What is it? Why, I have to pay over two thousand of this,"—he flourished the banknotes—"and even then I'll still have two thousand left. But wait—wait. There was the original fifty pounds. Where is that fifty pounds, little girl alive? Out with it. This is the profit. Where is the fifty you staked?" His voice was gay with raillery.

She could look him in the face now and prevaricate without any shame or compunction at all. "That fifty pounds—that! Why, I used it to buy my ticket for Canada. My husband ought to pay my expenses out to him."

He laughed greatly. All Ireland was rioting in his veins now. He had no logic or reasoning left. "Well, that's the way to get into your old man's heart, Mona. To think of that! I call it tact divine. Everything has spun my way at last. I was right about that Derby, after all. It was in my bones that I'd make a pot out of it, but I thought I had lost it all when Flamingo went down."

"You never know your luck—you used to say that, Shiel."

"I say it again. Come, we must tell our friends—

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Kitty, her mother, and the Young Doctor. You don't know what good friends they have been to me, mavourneen."

"Yes, I think I do," said Mona, opening the door to the outer room.

Then Crozier called with a great, cheery voice—what Mona used to call his tally-ho voice. Mrs. Tynan appeared, smiling. She knew at a glance what had happened. It was so interesting that she could even forgive Mona.

"Where's Kitty?" asked Crozier, almost boisterously.

"She has gone for a ride with John Sibley," answered Mrs. Tynan.

"Look, there she is!" said Mona, laying a hand on Crozier's arm, and pointing with the other out over the prairie.

Crozier looked out towards the northwestern horizon, and in the distance was a woman riding as hard as her horse could go, with a man galloping hard after her. It seemed as though they were riding into the sunset.

"She's riding the horse you won that race with years ago when you first came here, Mr. Crozier," said Mrs. Tynan. "John Sibley bought it from Mr. Brennan."

Mona did not see the look which came into Crozier's face as, with one hand shading his eyes and the other grasping the banknotes which were to start him in life again, independent and self-respecting, he watched the girl riding on and on, ever ahead of the man.

It was at that moment the Young Doctor entered the room, and he distracted Mona's attention for a moment. Going forward to him Mona shook him

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warmly by the hand. Then she went up to Mrs. Tynan and kissed her.

"I would like to kiss your daughter too, Mrs. Tynan," Mona said. . . . "What are you looking at so hard, Shiel?" she presently added to her husband.

He did not turn to her. His eyes were still shaded by his hand.

"That horse goes well yet," he said in a low voice. "As good as ever—as good as ever."

"He loves horses so," remarked Mona, as though she could tell Mrs. Tynan and the Young Doctor anything about Shiel Crozier which they did not know.

"Kitty rides well, doesn't she?" asked Mrs. Tynan of Crozier.

"What a pair—girl and horse!" Crozier exclaimed. "Thoroughbred—absolutely thoroughbred!"

Kitty had ridden away with her heart's secret, her very own, as she thought: but Shiel Crozier knew—the man that mattered knew.

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EPILOGUE

GOLDEN, all golden, save where there was a fringe of trees at a watercourse; save where a garden, like a spot of emerald, made a button on the royal garment wrapped across the breast of the prairie. Above, making for the trees of the foothills far away, a golden eagle floated, a prairie-hen sped affrighted from some invisible thing; and in the far distance a railway train slipped down the plain like a serpent making for a covert in the first hills of the first world that ever was.

At a casual glance the vast plain seemed uninhabited, yet here and there were men and horses, tiny in the vastness, but conquering. Here and there also—for it was July—a haymaker sharpened his scythe, and the sound came singing through the air radiant and stirring with life.

Seated in the shade of a clump of trees a girl sat with her chin in her hands looking out over the prairie, an intense dreaming in her eyes. Her horse was tethered near by, but it scarcely made a sound. It was a horse which had once won a great race, with an Irish gentleman on his back. Long time the girl sat absorbed, her golden colour, her brown-gold hair in harmony with the universal stencil of gold. With her eyes drowned in the distance, she presently murmured something to herself, and as she did so the eyes deepened to a nameless umber tone, deeper than gold, warmer than brown; such a colour as only can be found in a jewel or in a leaf the frost has touched.

The frost had touched the soul which gave the

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colour to the eyes of the girl. Yet she seemed all summer, all glow and youth and gladness. Her voice was golden, too, and the words which fell from her lips were as though tuned to the sound of falling water. The tone of the voice would last when the gold of all else became faded or tarnished. It had its origin in the soul:

"Whereaway goes my lad? Tell me, has he gone alone?
Never harsh word did I speak; never hurt I gave;
Strong he was and beautiful; like a heron he has flown—
Hereaway, hereaway will I make my grave."

The voice lingered on the words till it trailed away into nothing, like the vanishing note of a violin which seems still to pulse faintly after the sound has ceased.

"But he did not go alone, and I have not made my grave," the girl said, and raised her head at the sound of footsteps. With an effort she emerged from the half-trance in which she had been, and smiled at a man hastening towards her.

"Dear bully, bulbous being—how that word 'bully' would have made *her* cringe!" she said as the man ambled nearer. He could not go as fast as his mind urged him.

"I've got news—news, news!" he exclaimed, wading through his own perspiration to where she sat.

"I can guess what it is," the girl remarked smilingly, as she reached out a hand to him, but remained seated. "It's a real, live baby born to Lydia, wife of Methuselah, the woman also being of goodly years. It is, isn't it?"

"The fattest, finest, most 'scrumpshus' son of all the ages that ever——"

Kitty laughed happily and very whimsically. "Like

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none since Moses was found among the bulrushes! Where was this one found, and what do you intend to call him—Jesse, after his 'pa'?"

"No—nothing so common. He's to be called Shiel—Shiel Crozier Bulrush, that's to be his name."

The face of the girl became a shade pensive now. "Oh! And do you think you can guarantee that he will be worth the name? Do you never think what his father is?"

"I'm starting him right with that name. I can do so much, anyway," laughed the imperturbable one.

"And Mrs. Bulrush, after her great effort—how is she?"

"Flying—simply flying. Earth not good enough for her. Simply flying. But here—here is more news. Guess what—it's for you. I've just come from the post office, and they said there was an English letter for you, so I brought it."

He handed it over. She laid it in her lap and waited as though for him to go.

"Can't I hear how he is? He's the best man that ever crossed my path," he said.

"It happens to be in his wife's, not his, handwriting—did ever such a scrap of a woman write so sprawling a hand!" she replied, holding the letter up.

"But she'll let us know in the letter how Crozier is, won't she?"

Kitty had now recovered herself, and slowly she opened the envelope and took out the letter. As she did so something fluttered to the ground.

Jesse Bulrush picked it up. "That looks nice," he said, and he whistled in surprise. "It's a money-draft on a bank."

Kitty, whose eyes were fixed on the big, important

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handwriting, answered calmly and without apparently looking, as she took the paper from his hand: "Yes, it's a wedding present—five hundred dollars to buy what I like best for my home. So she says."

"Mrs. Crozier, of course."

"Of course."

"Well, that's magnificent. What will you do with it?"

Kitty rose and held out her hand. "Go back to your flying partner, happy man, and ask her what she would do with five hundred dollars if she had it."

"She'd buy her lord and master a present with it, of course," he answered.

"Good-bye, Mr. Rolypoly," she responded, laughing. "You always could think of things for other people to do; and have never done anything yourself until now. Good-bye, *father*."

When he was gone and out of sight her face changed. With sudden anger she crushed and crumpled up the draft for five hundred in her hand. "'A token of affection from both!'" she exclaimed, quoting from the letter. "One lone leaf of Irish shamrock from him would——"

She stopped. "But he will send a message of his own," she continued. "He will—he will. Even if he doesn't, I'll know that he remembers just the same. He does—he does remember."

She drew herself up with an effort, and, as it were, shook herself free from the memories which dimmed her eyes.

Not far away a man was riding towards the clump of trees where she was. She saw, and hastened to her horse.

"If I told John all I feel he'd understand. I believe

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he always has understood," she added with a far-off look.

The draft was still crushed in her hand when she mounted the beloved horse, whose name now was Shiel.

Presently she smoothed out the crumpled paper. "Yes, I'll take it; I'll put it by," she murmured. "John will keep on betting. He'll be broke some day and he'll need it, maybe."

A moment later she was riding hard to meet the man who, before the wheat-harvest came, would call her wife.

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WILD YOUTH

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To

THE TRUE FRIEND OF TWO GREAT PEOPLES

AND OF HUMANITY

WALTER HINES PAGE

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WILD YOUTH

CHAPTER I

THE MAZARINES TAKE POSSESSION

FROM the beginning, Askatoon had had more character and idiosyncrasy than any other town in the West. Perhaps that was because many of its citizens had marked personality, while some were distinctly original—a few so original as to be almost bizarre. The general intelligence was high, and this made the place alert for the new observer. It slept with one eye open; it waked with both eyes wide—as wide as the windows of the world. The virtue of being bright and clever was a doctrine which had never been taught in Askatoon; it was as natural as eating and drinking. Nothing ever really shook the place out of a wholesome control and composure. Now and then, however, the flag of distress was hoisted, and everybody in the place—from Patsy Kernaghan, the casual, at one end of the scale, and the Young Doctor, so called because he was young-looking when he first came to the place, who represented Askatoon in the meridian of its intellect, at the other—had sudden paralysis. That was the outstanding feature of Askatoon. Some places made a noise and flung things about in times of distress; but Askatoon always stood still and fumbled with its collar-buttons, as though to get more air. When it was poignantly moved, it leaned against the

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wall of its common sense, abashed, but vigilant and careful.

That is what it did when Mr. and Mrs. Joel Mazarine arrived at Askatoon to take possession of Tralee, the ranch which Michael Turley, abandoning because he had an unavoidable engagement in another world, left to his next of kin, with a legacy to another kinsman a little farther off. The next of kin had proved to be Joel Mazarine, from one of those stern English counties on the borders of Quebec, where ancient tribal prejudices and religious hatreds give a necessary relief to hard-driven human nature.

Michael Turley had lived much to himself on his ranch, but that was because in his latter days he had developed a secret taste for spirituous liquors which he had no wish to share with others. With the assistance of a bad cook and a constant spleen caused by resentment against the intervention of his priest, good Father Roche, he finished his career with great haste and without either becoming a nuisance to his neighbours or ruining his property. The property was clear of mortgage or debt when he set out on his endless journey.

When the prophet-bearded, huge, swarthy-faced Joel Mazarine, with a beautiful young girl behind him, stepped from the West-bound train and was greeted by the Mayor, who was one of the executors of Michael Turley's will, a shiver passed through Askatoon, and for one instant animation was suspended; for the jungle-looking newcomer, motioning forward the young girl, said to the Mayor:

"Mayor, this is Mrs. Mazarine. Shake hands with the Mayor, Mrs. Mazarine."

Mazarine did not speak very loud, but as an animal

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senses the truth of a danger far off with an unshakable certainty, the crowd at the station seemed to know by instinct what he said.

"Hell—that old whale and her!" growled Jonas Billings, the keeper of the livery-stable.

At Mazarine's words the Young Doctor, a man of rare gifts, individuality and authority in the place, who had come to the station to see a patient off to the mountains by this train, drew in his breath sharply, as though a spirit of repugnance was in his heart. This happened during the first years of the Young Doctor's career at Askatoon, when he was still alive with human prejudices, although he had a nature well balanced and singularly just. The strife between his prejudices and his sense of justice was what made him always interesting in all the great prairie and foothill country of which Askatoon was the centre.

He had got his shock, indeed, before Mazarine had introduced his wife to the Mayor. Not for nothing had he studied the human mind in its relation to the human body, and the expression of that mind speaking through the body. The instant Joel Mazarine and his wife stepped out of the train, he knew they were what they were to each other. That was a real achievement in knowledge, because Mazarine was certainly sixty-five if he was a day, and his wife was a slim, willowy slip of a girl, not more than nineteen years of age, with the most wonderful Irish blue eyes and long dark lashes. There was nothing of the wife or woman about her, save something in the eyes, which seemed to belong to ages past and gone, something so solemnly wise, yet so painfully confused, that there flashed into the Young Doctor's mind at first glance of her the vision of a young bird caught from its thoughtless,

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sunbright journeyings, its reckless freedom of winged life, into the captivity of a cage.

She smiled, this child, as she shook hands with the Mayor, and it had the appeal of one who had learned the value of smiling—as though it answered many a question and took the place of words and the trials of the tongue. It was pitifully mechanical. As the Young Doctor saw, it was the smile of a captive in a strange uncomprehended world, more a dream than a reality.

"Mrs. Mazarine, welcome," said the Mayor after an abashed pause. "We're proud of this town, but we'll be prouder still, now you've come."

The girl-wife smiled again. At the same time it was as though she glanced apprehensively out of the corner of her eye at the old man by her side, as she said:

"Thank you. There seems to be plenty of room for us out here, so we needn't get in each other's way. . . . I've never been on the prairie before," she added.

The Young Doctor realized that her reply had meanings which would escape the understanding of the Mayor, and her apprehensive glance had told him of the gruesome jealousy of this old man at her side. The Mayor's polite words had caused the long, clean-shaven upper lip of the old man with the look of a debauched prophet, to lengthen surlily; and he noticed that a wide, flat foot in a big knee-boot, inside trousers too short, tapped the ground impatiently.

"We must be getting on to Tralee," said a voice that seemed to force its way through bronchial obstructions. "Come, Mrs. Mazarine."

He laid a big, flat, tropical hand, which gave the impression of being splayed, on the girl's shoulder. The gallant words of the Mayor—a chivalrous mountain-

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man—had set dark elements working. As the new master of Tralee stepped forward, the Young Doctor could not help noticing how large and hairy were the ears that stood far out from the devilish head. It was a huge, steel-twisted, primitive man, who somehow gave the impression of a gorilla. The face was repulsive in its combination of surly smugness, as shown by the long upper lip, by a repellent darkness round the small, furtive eyes, by a hardness in the huge, bearded jaw, and by a mouth of primary animalism.

The Mayor caught sight of the Young Doctor, and he stopped the incongruous pair as they moved to the station doorway, the girl in front, as though driven.

"Mr. Mazarine, you've got to know the man who counts for more in Askatoon than anybody else; Doctor, you've got to know Mr. Mazarine," said the generous Mayor.

Repugnance was in full possession of the Young Doctor, but he was scientific and he was philosophic, if nothi[illegible] else. He shook hands with Mazarine deliberat[illegible] he could prevent it, there should be, where[illegible]cerned, no jealousy, such as Mazarine had s[illegible]ds the Mayor, in connection with his h[illegible]site creature in the grip of [illegible] [illegible] with the girl with only a [illegible] [illegible] he felt a sudden [illegible] [illegible] It was like [illegible] [illegible] was the [illegible] [illegible] the girl [illegible]

only the longing for help on the girl's part, undefined as it was. On the man's part there was a soul whose gift and duty were healing. As the two passed on, the Young Doctor looked around him at the exclaiming crowd, for few had left the station when the train rolled out. Curiosity was an obsession with the people of Askatoon.

"Well, I never!" said round-faced Mrs. Skinner, with huge hips and gray curls. "Did you ever see the like?"

"I call it a shame," declared an indignant young woman, gripping tighter the hand of her little child, the daughter of a young butcher of twenty-three years of age.

"Poor lamb!" another motherly voice said.

"She ought to be ashamed of herself—money, I suppose," sneered Ellen Banner, a sour-faced shopkeeper's daughter, who had taught in Sunday school for twenty years and was still single.

"Beauty and the beast," remarked the Young Doctor to himself, as he saw the two drive away, Patsy Kernaghan running beside the wagon, evidently trying to make friends with the mastodon of Tralee.

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CHAPTER II

"MY NAME IS LOUISE"

ASKATOON never included the Mazarines in its social scheme. Certainly Tralee was some distance from the town, but, apart from that, the new-comers remained incongruous, alien and alone. The handsome, inanimate girl-wife never appeared by herself in the streets of Askatoon, but always in the company of her morose husband, whose only human association seemed to be his membership in the Methodist body so prominent in the town. Every Sunday morning he tied his pair of bay horses with the covered buggy to the hitching-post in the church-shed and marched his wife to the very front seat in the Meeting House, having taken possession of it on his first visit, as though it had no other claimants. Subsequently he held it in almost solitary control, because other members of the congregation, feeling his repugnance to companionship, gave him the isolation he wished. As a rule he and his wife left the building before the last hymn was sung, so avoiding conversation. Now and again he stayed to a prayer-meeting and, doing so, invariably "led in prayer," to a very limited chorus of "Amens." For in spite of the position which Tralee conferred on its owner, there was a natural shrinking from "that wild boar," as outspoken Sister Skinner called him in the presence of the puzzled and troubled Minister.

This was always a time of pained confusion for the girl-wife. She had never "got religion," and there was something startling to her undeveloped nature in the

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thunderous apostrophes, in terms of the oldest part of the Old Testament, used by her tyrant when he wrestled with the Lord in prayer.

These were perhaps the only times when her face was the mirror of her confused, vague and troubled youth. Captive in a world bounded by a man's will, she simply did not begin to understand this strange and overpowering creature who had taken possession of her body, mind and soul. She trembled and hesitated before every cave of mystery which her daily life with him opened darkly to her abashed eyes. She felt herself going round and round and round in a circle, not forlorn enough to rebel or break away, but dazed and wondering and shrinking. She was like one robbed of will, made mechanical by a stern conformity to imposed rules of life and conduct. There were women in Askatoon who were sorry for her and made efforts to get near her; but whether it was the Methodist Minister or his wife, or the most voluble sister of the prayer-meeting, none got beyond the threshold of Tralee, as it were.

The girl-wife abashed them. She was as one who automatically spoke as she was told to speak, did what she was told to do. Yet she always smiled at the visitors when they came, or when she saw them and others at the Meeting House. It was, however, not a smile for an individual, whoever that individual might chance to be. It was only the kindness of her nature expressing itself. Talking seemed like the exercise of a foreign language to her, but her smiling was free and unconstrained, and it belonged to all, without selection.

The Young Doctor, looking at her one day as she sat in a buggy while her monster-man was inside the chemist's shop, said to himself:

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"Sterilized! Absolutely, shamefully sterilized! But suppose she wakes up suddenly out of that dream between life and death—what will happen?"

He remembered that curious, sudden, delicate catch of his palm on the day when they first shook hands at the railway-station, and to him it was like the flutter of life in a thing which seemed dead. How often he had noticed it in man and animal on the verge of extinction! He had not mistaken that fluttering appeal of her fingers. He was young enough to translate it into flattering terms of emotion, but he did not do so. He was fancy-free himself, and the time would come when he would do a tremendous thing where a woman was concerned, a woman in something the same position as this poor girl; but that shaking, thrilling thing was still far off from him. For this child he only felt the healer's desire to heal.

He was one of those men who never force an issue; he never put forward the hands of the clock. He felt that sooner or later Louise Mazarine—he did not yet know her Christian name—would command his help, as so many had done in that prairie country, and not necessarily for relief of physical pain or the curing of disease. He had helped as many men and women mentally and morally as physically; the spirit of healing was behind everything he did. His world recognized it, and that was why he was never known by his name in all the district—he was only admiringly called "The Young Doctor."

He had never been to Tralee since the Mazarines had arrived, though he had passed it often and had sometimes seen Louise in the garden with her dog, her black cat and her bright canary. The combination of the cat and the canary did not seem incongruous where

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she was concerned; it was as though something in her passionless self neutralized even the antagonisms of natural history. She had made the gloomy black cat and the light-hearted canary to be friends. Perhaps that came from an everlasting patience which her life had bred in her; perhaps it was the powerful gift of one in touch with the remote, primitive things.

The Young Doctor had also seen her in the paddock with the horses, bare-headed, lithe and so girlishly slim, with none of the unmistakable if elusive lines belonging to the maturity which marriage brings. He had taken off his hat to her in the distance, but she had never waved a hand in reply. She only stood and gazed at him, and her look followed him long after he passed by. He knew well that in the gaze was nothing of the interest which a woman feels in a man; it was the look of one chained to a rock, who sees a Samaritan in the cheerless distance.

In the daily round of her life she was always busy; not restlessly, but constantly, and always silently, busy. She was even more silent than her laconic half-breed hired woman, Rada. There was no talk with her gloating husband which was not monosyllabic. Her canary sang, but no music ever broke from her own lips. She murmured over her lovely yellow companion; she kissed it, pleaded with it for more song, but the only music at her own lips was the occasional music of her voice; and it had a colourless quality which, though gentle, had none of the eloquence and warmth of youth.

In form and feature she was one made for emotion and demonstration, and the passionate play of the innocent enterprises of wild youth; but there was nothing of that in her. Gray age had drunk her life and

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had given her nothing in return—neither companionship nor sympathy nor understanding; only the hunger of a coarse manhood. Her obedience to the supreme will of her jealous jailer gave no ground for scolding or reproach, and that saved her much. She was even quietly cheerful, but it was only the pale reflection of a lost youth which would have been buoyant and gallant, gay and glad, had it been given the natural thing in the natural world.

There came a day, however, when the long, unchanging routine, gray with prison grayness, was broken; when the round of household duties and the prison discipline were interrupted. It was as sudden as a storm in the tropics, as final and as fateful as birth or death. That day she was taken suddenly and acutely ill. It was only a temporary malady, an agonizing pain which had its origin in a sudden chill. This chill was due, as the Young Doctor knew when he came, to a vitality which did not renew itself, which got nothing from the life to which it was sealed, which for some reason could not absorb energy from the stinging, vital life of the prairie world in the June-time.

In her sudden anguish, and in the absence of Joel Mazarine, she sent for the Young Doctor. That in itself was courageous, because it was impossible to tell what view the master of Tralee would take of her action, ill though she was. She was not supposed to exercise her will. If Joel Mazarine had been at home, he would have sent for wheezy, decrepit old Doctor Gensing, whose practice the Young Doctor had completely absorbed over a series of years.

But the Young Doctor came. Rada, the half-breed woman, had undressed Louise and put her to bed; and he found her white as snow at the end of a parox-

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ysm of pain, her long eyelashes lying on a cheek as smooth as a piece of Satsuma ware which has had the loving polish of ten thousand friendly fingers over innumerable years. When he came and stood beside her bed, she put out her hand slowly towards him. As he took it in his firm, reassuring grasp, he felt the same fluttering appeal which had marked their hand-clasp on the day of their first meeting at the railway-station. Looking at the huge bed and the rancher-farmer's coarse clothes hanging on pegs, the big greased boots against the wall, a sudden savage feeling of disgust and anger took hold of him; but the spirit of healing at once emerged, and he concentrated himself upon the duty before him.

For a whole hour he worked with her, and at length subdued the convulsions of pain which distorted the beautiful face and made the childlike body writhe. He had a resentment against the crime which had been committed. Marriage had not made her into a woman; it had driven her back into an arrested youth. It was as though she ought to have worn short skirts and her hair in a long braid down her back. Hers was the body of a young boy. When she was free from pain, and the colour had come back to her cheeks a little, she smiled at him, and was about to put out her hand as a child might to a brother or a father, when suddenly a shadow stole into her eyes and crept across her face, and she drew her clenched hand close to her body. Still, she tried to smile at him.

His quiet, impersonal, though friendly look soothed her.

"Am I very sick?" she asked.

He shook his head and smiled. "You'll be all right to-morrow, I hope."

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"That's too bad. I would like to be so sick that I couldn't think of anything else. My father used to say that the world was only the size of four walls to a sick person."

"I can't promise you so small a world," remarked the Young Doctor with a kind smile, his arm resting on the side of the bed, his chair drawn alongside. "You will have to face the whole universe to-morrow, same as ever."

She looked perplexed, and then said to him: "I used to think it was a beautiful world, and they try to make me think it is yet; but it isn't."

"Who try to make you?" he asked.

"Oh, my bird Richard, and Nigger the black cat, and Jumbo, the dog," she replied.

Her eyes closed, then opened strangely wide upon him in an eager, staring appeal.

"Don't you want to know about me?" she asked. "I want to tell you—I want to tell you. I'm tired of telling it all over to myself."

The Young Doctor did not want to know. As a doctor he did not want to know.

"Not now," he said firmly. "Tell me when I come again."

A look of pain came into her face. "But who can tell when you'll come again!" she pleaded.

"When I will things to be, they generally happen," he answered in a commonplace tone. "You are my patient now, and I must keep an eye on you. So I'll come."

Again, with an almost spasmodical movement towards him, she said:

"I must tell you. I wanted to tell you the first day I saw you. You seemed the same kind of man my

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father was. My name's Louise. It was my mother made me do it. There was a mortgage—I was only sixteen. It's three years ago. He said to my mother he'd tear up the mortgage if I married him. That's why I'm here with him—Mrs. Mazarine. But my name's Louise."

"Yes, yes, I know," the Young Doctor answered soothingly. "But you must not talk of it now. I understand perfectly. Tell me all about it another time."

"You don't think I should have——" She paused.

"Of course. I tell you I understand. Now you must be quiet. Drink this." He got up and poured some liquid into a glass.

At that moment there was a noise below in the hall.

"That's my husband," the girl-wife said, and the old wan captive-look came into her face.

"That's all right," replied the Young Doctor. "He'll find you better."

At that moment the half-breed woman entered the room. "He's here," she said, and came towards the bed.

"That old woman has sense," the Young Doctor murmured to himself. "She knows her man."

A minute later Joel Mazarine was in the room, and he saw the half-breed woman lift his wife's head, while the Young Doctor held a glass to her lips.

"What's all this?" Mazarine said roughly. "What ——?" He stopped suddenly, for the Young Doctor faced him sharply.

"She must be left alone," he said firmly and quietly, his eyes fastening the old man's eyes; and there was that in them which would not be gainsaid. "I have just given her medicine. She has been in great pain.

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We are not needed here now." He motioned towards the door. "She must be left alone."

For an instant it seemed that the old man was going to resist the dictation; but presently, after a scrutinizing look at the still, shrinking figure in the bed, he swung round, left the room and descended the stairs, the Young Doctor following.

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CHAPTER III

"I HAVE FOUGHT WITH BEASTS AT EPHESUS"

THE old man led the way outside the house, as though to be rid of his visitor as soon as possible. This was so obvious that, for an instant, the Young Doctor was disposed to try conclusions with the old slaver, and summon him back to the dining-room. The Mazarine sort of man always roused fighting, masterful forces in him. He was never averse to a contest of wills, and he had had much of it; it was inseparable from his methods of healing. He knew that nine people out of ten never gave a true history of their physical troubles, never told their whole story: first because they had no gift for reporting, no observation; and also because the physical ailments of many of them were aggravated or induced by mental anxieties. Then it was that he imposed himself; as it were, fought the deceiver and his deceit, or the ignorant one and his ignorance; and numbers of people, under his sympathetic, wordless inquiry, poured their troubles into his ears, as the girl-wife upstairs had tried to do.

When the old man turned to face him in the sunlight, his boots soiled with dust and manure, his long upper lip feeling about over the lower lip and its shaggy growth of beard like some sea-monster feeling for its prey, the Young Doctor had a sensation of rancour. His mind flashed to that upstairs room, where a comely captive creature was lying not an arm's-

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length from the coats and trousers and shabby waistcoats of this barbarian. Somehow that row of tenantless clothes, and the top-boots, greased with tallow, standing against the wall, were more characteristic of the situation than the old land-leviathan himself, blinking his beady, greenish eyes at the Young Doctor. That blinking was a repulsive characteristic; it was like serpents gulping live things.

"What's the matter with her?" the old man asked, jerking his head towards the upper window.

The Young Doctor expalined quickly the immediate trouble, and then added:

"But it would not have taken hold of her so if she was not run down. She is not in a condition to resist. When her system exhausts, it does not refill, as it were."

"What sort of dictionary talk is that? Run down —here!" The old man sniffed the air like an ancient sow. "Run down—in this life, with the best of food, warm weather, and more ozone than a sailor gets at sea! It's an insult to Jehovah, such nonsense."

"Mr. Mazarine," rejoined the Young Doctor with ominous determination in his eye, "you know a good deal, I should think, about spring wheat and fall ploughing, about making sows fat, or burning fallow land—that's your trade, and I shouldn't want to challenge you on it all; or you know when to give a horse bran-mash, or a heifer saltpetre, but—well, I know my job in the same way. They will tell you, about here, that I have a kind of hobby for keeping people from digging and crawling into their own graves. That's my business, and the habit of saving human life, because you're paid for it, becomes in time a habit of saving human life for its very own sake. I

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warn you—and perhaps it's a matter of some concern to you—Mrs. Mazarine is in a bad way."

Resentful and incredulous, the old man was about to speak, but the Young Doctor made an arresting gesture, and added:

"She has very little strength to go on with. She ought to be plump; her pulses ought to beat hard; her cheeks ought to be rosy; she should walk with a spring and be strong and steady as a soldier on the march; but she is none of these things, can do none of these things. You've got a thousand things to do, and you do them because you want to do them. There is something making new life in you all the time, but Mrs. Mazarine makes no new life as she goes on. Every day is taking something out of her, and there's nothing being renewed. Sometimes neither good food nor ozone is enough; and you've got to take care, or you'll lose Mrs. Mazarine." He could not induce himself to speak of her as "wife."

For a moment the unwholesome mouth seemed to be chewing unpleasant herbs, and the beady eyes blinked viciously.

"I'm not swallowin' your meaning," Mazarine said at last. "I never studied Greek. If a woman has a disease, there it is, and you can deal with it or not; but if she hasn't no disease, then it's chicanyery—chicanyery. Doctors talk a lot of gibberish these here days. What I want to know is, has my wife got a disease? I haven't seen any signs. Is it Bright's, or cancer, or the lungs, or the liver, or the kidneys, or the heart, or what's its name?"

The Young Doctor had an impulse to flay the heathen, but for the girl-wife's sake he forbore.

"I don't think it is any of those troubles," he re-

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plied smoothly. "She needs a thorough examination. But one thing is clear: she is wasting; she is losing ground instead of going ahead. There's a malignant influence working. She's standing still, and to stand still in youth is fatal. I can imagine you don't want to lose her, eh?"

The Young Doctor's gray-blue eyes endeavoured to hold the blinking beads under the shaggy eyebrows long enough to get control of a mind which had the cunning and cruelty of an animal. He succeeded.

The old man would a thousand times rather his wife lived than died. In the first place, to lose her was to sacrifice that which he had paid for dearly—a mortgage of ten thousand dollars torn up. Louise Mazarine represented that to him first—ten thousand dollars. Secondly, she was worth it in every way. He had what hosts of others would be glad to have—men younger and better looking than himself. She represented the triumph of age. He had lived his life; he had buried two wives; he had had children; he had made money; and yet here, when other men of his years were thinking of making wills, and eating porridge, and waiting for the Dark Policeman to come and arrest them for loitering, he was left a magnificent piece of property like Tralee; and he had all the sources of pleasure open to a young man walking the primrose path. He was living right up to the last. Both his wives were gray-headed when they died—it turned them gray to live with him; both had died before they were fifty; and here he was the sole owner of a wonderful young head, with hair that reached to the waist, with lips like cool fruit from an orchard-tree, and the indescribable charm of youth and loveliness which the young themselves never really understood. That

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was what he used to say to himself; it was only age could appreciate youth and beauty; youth did not understand.

Thus the Young Doctor's question roused in him something at once savage and apprehensive. Of course he wanted Louise to live. Why should she not live?

"Doesn't any husband want his wife to live!" he answered sullenly. "But I want to know what ails her. What medicine you going to give her?"

"I don't know," the Young Doctor replied meditatively. "When she is quite rid of this attack, I'll examine her again and let you know."

Suddenly there shot into the greenish old eyes a reddish look of rage; jealousy, horrible, gruesome jealousy, took possession of Joel Mazarine. This young man to come in and go out of his wife's bedroom, to—— Why weren't there women doctors? He would get one over from the Coast, or from Winnipeg, or else there was old Doctor Gensing, in Askatoon—who was seventy-five at least. He would call him in and get rid of this offensive young pill-maker.

"I don't believe there's anything the matter with her," he declared stubbornly. "She's been healthy as a woman can be, living this life here. What's her disease? I've asked you. What is it?"

The other laid a hand on himself, and in the colourless voice of the expert, said: "Old age—that's her trouble, so far as I can see."

He paused, foreseeing the ferocious look which swept into the repulsive face, and the clenching of the big hands. Then in a soothing, reflective kind of voice he added:

"Senile decay—you know all about that. Well, now, it happens sometimes—not often, but it does

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happen—that a very young person for some cause or another suffers from senile decay. Some terrible leakage of youth occurs. It has been cured, though, and I've cured one or two cases myself."

He was almost prevaricating—but in a good cause. "Mrs. Mazarine's is a case which can be cured, I think," he continued. "As you've remarked, Mr. Mazarine,"—his voice was now persuasive,—"here is fine air, and a good, comfortable home——"

Suddenly he broke off, and as though in innocent inquiry said: "Now, has she too much to do? Has she sufficient help in the house for one so young?"

"She doesn't do more than's good for her," answered the old man, "and there's the half-breed hired critter—you've seen her—and Li Choo, a Chinaman, too. That ought to be enough," he added scornfully.

The Young Doctor seemed to reflect, and his face became urbane, because he saw he must proceed warily, if he was to be of service to his new patient.

"Yes," he said emphatically, "she appears to have help enough. I must think over her case and see her again to-morrow."

The old man's look suddenly darkened. "Ain't she better?" he asked.

"She's not so much better that there's no danger of her being worse," the Young Doctor replied decisively. "I certainly must see her to-morrow."

"Why," the old man remarked, waving his splayed hand up and down in a gesture of emphasis, "she's never been sick. She's in and out of this house all day. She goes about with her animals like as if she hadn't a care or an ache or pain in the world. I've heard of women that fancied they was sick because they hadn't too much to do, and was too well off, and

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was treated too well. Highsterics, they call it. Lots of women, lots and lots of them, would be glad to have such a home as this, and would stay healthy in it."

The Young Docor felt he had made headway, and he let it go at that. It was clear he was to be permitted to come to-morrow. "Yes, it's a fine place," he replied convincingly. "Three thousand acres is a mighty big place when you've got farm-land as well as cattle-grazing."

"It's nearly all good farm-land," answered the old man with decision. "I don't believe much in ranching or cattle. I'm for the plough and the wheat. There's more danger from cattle disease than from bad crops. I'm getting rid of my cattle. I expect to sell a lot of 'em to-day." An avaricious smile of satisfaction drew down the corners of his lips. "I've got a good customer. He ought to be on the trail now." He drew out a huge silver watch. "Yes, he's due. The party's a foreigner, I believe. He lives over at Slow Down Ranch—got a French name."

"Oh, Giggles!" said the Young Doctor with a quick smile.

The old man shook his head: "No, that ain't the name. It's Guise—Orlando Guise is the name."

"Same thing," remarked the Young Doctor. "They call him Giggles for short. You've seen him of course?"

"No, I've been dealing with him so far through a third party. Why's he called Giggles?" asked the Master of Tralee.

"Well, you'll know when you see him. He's not cut according to everybody's measure. If you're dealing with him, don't think him a fool because he chirrups, and don't size him up according to his looks. He's a

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dude. Some call him The Duke, but mostly he's known as Giggles."

"Fools weary me," grumbled the other.

"Well, as I said, you mustn't begin dealing with him on the basis of his looks. Looks don't often tell the truth. For instance, you're known as a Christian and a Methodist!" He looked the old man slowly up and down, and in anyone else it would have seemed gross insolence, but the urbane smile at his lips belied the malice of his words. "Well, you know you don't look like a Methodist. You look like,"—innocence showed in his eye; there was no ulterior purpose in his face,—"you look like one of the bad McMahon lot of claim-jumpers over there in the foothills. I suppose that seems so, only because ranchmen aren't generally pious. Well, in the same way, Giggles doesn't really look like a ranchman; but he's every bit as good a ranchman as you are a Christian and a Methodist!"

The Young Doctor looked the old man in the face with such a semblance of honesty that he succeeded in disarming a dangerous suspicion of mockery—dangerous, if he was to continue family physician at Tralee. "Ah," he suddenly remarked, "there comes Orlando now!" He pointed to a spot about half a mile away, where a horseman could be seen cantering slowly towards Tralee.

A moment afterwards, from his buggy, the Young Doctor said: "Mrs. Mazarine must be left alone until I see her again. She must not be disturbed. The half-breed woman can look after her. I've told her what to do. You'll keep to another room, of course."

"There's a bunk in that room where I could sleep," said the other, with a note of protest.

"I'm afraid that, in our patient's interest, you must

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do what I say," the other insisted, with a friendly smile which caused him a great effort. "If I make her bloom again, that will suit you, won't it?"

A look of gloating came into the other's eyes: "Let it go at that," he said. "Mebbe I'll take her over to the sea before the wheat-harvest."

Out on the Askatoon trail, the Young Doctor ruminated over what he had seen and heard at Tralee.

"That old geezer will get an awful jolt one day," he said to himself. "If that girl should wake! Her eyes —if somebody comes along and draws the curtains! She hasn't the least idea of where she is or what it all means. All she knows is that she's a prisoner in some strange, savage country and doesn't know its language or anybody at all—as though she'd lost her memory. Any fellow, young, handsome and with enough dash and colour to make him romantic could do it. . . . Poor little robin in the snow!" he added, and looked back towards Tralee.

As he did so, the man from Slow Down Ranch cantering towards Tralee caught his eye.

"Louise—Orlando," he said musingly; then, with a sudden flick of the reins on his horse's back, he added abruptly, almost sternly, "By the great horn spoons, no!"

Thus when his prophecy took concrete form, he revolted from it. A grave look came into his face.

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CHAPTER IV

TWO SIDES TO A BARGAIN

As the Young Doctor had said, Orlando Guise did not look like a real, simon-pure "cowpuncher." He had the appearance of being dressed for the part, like an actor who has never mounted a cayuse, in a Wild West play. Yet on this particular day,—when the whole prairie country was alive with light, thrilling with elixir from the bottle of old Eden's vintage, and as comfortable as a garden where upon a red wall the peach-vines cling—he seemed far more than usual the close-fitting, soil-touched son of the prairie. His wide felt hat, turned up on one side like a trooper's, was well back on his head; his pinkish brown face was freely taking the sun, and his clear, light-blue eyes gazed ahead unblinking in the strong light. His forehead was unwrinkled—a rare thing in that prairie country where the dry air corrugates the skin; his light-brown hair curled loosely on the brow, graduating back to closer, crisper curls which in their thickness made a kind of furry cap. It was like the coat of a French poodle, so glossy and so companionable was it to the head. A bright handkerchief of scarlet was tied loosely around his throat, which was even a little more bare than was the average ranchman's; and his thick, much-pocketed flannel shirt, worn in place of a waistcoat and coat, was of a shade of red which contrasted and yet harmonized with the scarlet of the neckerchief. He did not wear the sheepskin leggings so common among the ranchmen of the West, but a

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pair of yellowish corduory riding-breeches, with boots that laced from the ankle to the knee. These boots had that touch of the theatrical which made him more fantastic than original in the eyes of his fellow-citizens.

Also he wore a ring with a star-sapphire, which made him incongruous, showy and foppish, and that was a thing not easy of forgiveness in the West. Certainly the West would not have tolerated him as far as it did, had it not been for three things: the extraordinary good nature which made him giggle; the fact that on more than one occasion he had given conclusive evidence that he was brave; and the knowledge that he was at least well-to-do. In a kind of vague way people had come to realize that his giggles belonged to a nature without guile and recklessly frank.

"He beats the band," Jonas Billings, the livery-stable keeper, had said of him; while Burlingame, the pernicious lawyer of shady character, had remarked that he had the name of an impostor and the frame of a fop; but he wasn't sure, as a lawyer, that he'd seen all the papers in the case—which was tantamount to saying that the Orlando nut needed some cracking.

It was generally agreed that his name was ridiculous, romantic and unreasonable. It seemed to challenge public opinion. Most names in the West were without any picturesqueness or colour; they were commonplace and almost geometric in their form, more like numbers to represent people than things of character in themselves. There were names semi-scriptural and semi-foreign in Askatoon, but no name like Orlando Guise had ever come that way before, and nothing like the man himself had ever ridden the Askatoon trails. One thing had to be said, however; he rode the trail like a broncho-buster, and he sat his

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horse as though he had been born in the saddle. On this particular day, in spite of his garish "get-up," he seemed to belong to the life in which he was light-heartedly whistling a solo from one of Meyerbeer's operas. Meyerbeer was certainly incongruous to the prairie, but it and the whistling were in keeping with the man himself.

Over on Slow Down Ranch there lived a curious old lady who wore a bonnet of Sweet Sixteen of the time of the Crimea, and with a sense of colour which would wreck the reputation of a kaleidoscope. She it was who had taught her son Orlando the tunefulness of Meyerbeer and Balfe and Offenbach, and the operatic jingles of that type of composer. Orlando Guise had come by his outward showiness naturally. Yet he was not like his mother, save in this particular. His mother was flighty and had no sense, while he, behind the gaiety of his wardrobe and his giggles, had very much sense of a quite original kind. Even as he whistled Meyerbeer, riding towards Tralee, his eyes had a look of one who was trying to see into things; and his lips, when the whistling ceased, had a cheerful pucker which seemed to show that he had seen what he wanted.

"Wonder if I'll get a glimpse of the so-called Mrs. Mazarine," he said aloud. "Bad enough to marry a back-timer, but to marry Mazarine—they don't say she's blind, either! Money—what won't we do for money, Mary? But if she's as young as they say, she could have waited a bit for the oof-bird to fly her way. Lots of men have money as well as looks. Anyhow, I'm ready to take his cattle off his hands on a fair, square deal, and if his girl-missis is what they say, I wouldn't mind——"

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Having said this, he giggled and giggled again at his unspoken impertinence. He knew he had almost said something fatuous, but the suppressed idea appealed to him, nevertheless; for whatever he did, he always had a vision of doing something else; and wherever he was, he was always fancying himself to be somewhere else. That was the strain of romance in him which came from his mixed ancestry. It was the froth and bubble of a dreamer's legacy, which had made his mother, always unconsciously theatrical, have a vision of a life on the prairies, with the white mountains in the distance, where her beloved son would be master of a vast domain, over which he should ride like one of Cortez' conquistadores. Having "money to burn," she had, at a fortunate moment, bought the ranch which, by accident, had done well from the start, and bade fair, through the giggling astuteness of her spectacular son, to do far better still by design.

On the first day of their arrival at Slow Down Ranch, the mother had presented Orlando with a most magnificent Mexican bridle and head-stall covered with silver conchs, and a saddle with stirrups inlaid with silver. Wherefore, it was no wonder that most people stared and wondered, while some sneered and some even hated. On the whole, however, Orlando Guise was in the way of making a place for himself in the West in spite of natural drawbacks.

Old Mazarine did not merely sneer as he saw the gay cavalier approach, he snorted; and he would have blasphemed, if he had not been a professing Christian.

"Circus rider!" he said to himself. "Wants taking down some, and he's come to the right place to get it."

On his part, Orlando Guise showed his dislike of the

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repellent figure by a brusque giggle, and further expressed what was in his mind by the one word:

"Turk!"

His repugnance, however, was balanced by something possessing the old man still more disagreeable. Like a malignant liquid, there crept up through Joel Mazarine's body to the roots of his hair the ancient virus of Cain. It was jealous, ravenous, grim: old age hating the rich, robust, panting youth of the man before him. Was it that being half man, half beast, he had some animal instinct concerning this young rough-rider before him? Did he in some vague, prescient way associate this gaudy newcomer with his girl-wife? He could not himself have said. Primitive passions are corporate of many feelings but of little sight.

As Orlando Guise slid from his horse, Joel Mazarine steadied himself and said: "Come about the cattle? Ready to buy and pay cash down?"

Orlando Guise giggled.

"What are you sniggering at?" snorted the old man.

"I thought it was understood that if I liked the bunch I was to pay cash," Orlando replied. "I've got a good report of the beasts, but I want to look them over. My head cattleman told you what I'd do. That's why I smiled. Funny, too: you don't look like a man who'd talk more than was wanted." He giggled again.

"Fool—I'll make you laugh on the other side of your mouth!" the Master of Tralee said to himself; and then he motioned to where a bunch of a hundred or so cattle were grazing in a little dip of the country between them and Askatoon. "I'll get my buck-

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board. It's all hitched up and ready, and we can get down and see them right now," he said aloud.

"Won't you find it rough going on the buckboard? Better ride," remarked Orlando Guise.

"I don't ever notice rough going," grunted the old man. "Some people ride horses to show themselves off; I ride a buckboard 'cause it suits me."

Orlando Guise chirruped. "Say, we mustn't get scrapping," he said gaily. "We've got to make a bargain."

In a few moments they were sweeping across the prairie, and sure enough the buckboard bumped, tumbled and plunged into the holes of the gophers and coyotes, but the old man sat the seat with the tenacity of a gorilla clinging to the branch of a tree.

In about three-quarters of an hour the two returned to Tralee, and in front of the house the final bargaining took place. There was a difference of five hundred dollars between them, and the old man fought stubbornly for it; and though Orlando giggled, it was clear he was no fool at a bargain, and that he had many resources. At last he threw doubt upon the pedigree of a bull. With a snarl Mazarine strode into the house. He had that pedigree, and it was indisputable. He would show the young swaggerer that he could not be caught anywhere in this game.

As Joel Mazarine entered the doorway of the house Orlando giggled again, because he had two or three other useful traps ready, and this was really like baiting a bull. Every thrust made this bull more angry; and Orlando knew that if he became angry enough he could bring things to a head with a device by which the old man would be forced to yield; for he did not want to buy, as much as Mazarine wished to sell.

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The device, however, was never used, and Orlando ceased giggling suddenly, for chancing to glance up he saw a face at a window, pale, exquisite, delicate, with eyes that stared and stared at him as though he were a creature from some other world.

Such a look he had never seen in anybody's eyes; such a look Louise Mazarine had never given in her life before. Something had drawn her out of her bed in spite of herself—a voice which was not that of old Joel Mazarine; but a new, fresh, vibrant voice which broke into little spells of inconsequent laughter. She loved inconsequent laughter, and never heard it at Tralee. She had crept from her bed and to the window, and before he saw her, she had watched him with a look which slowly became an awakening: as though curtains had been drawn aside revealing a new, strange, ecstatic world.

Louise Mazarine had seen something she had never seen before, because a feeling had been born in her which she had never felt. She had never fully known what sex was, or in any real sense what man meant. This romantic, picturesque, buoyant figure of youth struck her as the rock was struck by Moses; and for the first time in all her days she was wholly alive. Also, for the first time in his life, Orlando Guise felt a wonder which in spite of the hereditary romance in him had never touched him before. Like Ferdinand and Miranda in *The Tempest*, "they changed eyes."

A heavy step was heard coming through the hallway, and at once the exquisite, staring face at the window vanished—while Orlando Guise turned his back upon the open doorway and walked a few steps towards the gate in an effort to recover himself. When he turned again to meet Mazarine, who had a paper

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in his hand, there was a flush on his cheek and a new light in his eye. The old man did not notice that, however, for his avaricious soul was fixed upon the paper in his hand. He thrust it before Orlando's eyes. "What you got to say to that, Mister?" he demanded.

Orlando appeared to examine the paper carefully, and presently he handed it back and said slowly: "That gives you the extra five hundred. It's a bargain." How suddenly he had capitulated!

"Cash?" asked the old man triumphantly. How should he know by what means Orlando had been conquered!

"I've got a cheque in my pocket. I'll fill it in."

"A cheque ain't cash," growled the grizzly one.

"You can cash it in an hour. Come in to Askatoon, and I'll get you the cash with it now," said Orlando.

"I can't. A man's coming for a stallion I want to sell. Give me a hundred dollars cash now to clinch the bargain, and I'll meet you at Askatoon to-morrow and get the whole of it in cash. I don't deal with banks. I pay hard money, and I get hard money. That's my rule."

"Well, you're in luck, for I've got a hundred dollars," answered Orlando. "I've just got that, and a dollar besides, in my pocket. To-morrow you go to my lawyer, Burlingame, at Askatoon, and you'll get the rest of the money. It will be there waiting for you."

"Cash?" pressed the old man.

"Certainly: Government hundred-dollar bills. Give me a receipt for this hundred dollars."

"Come inside," said the old man almost cheerfully. He loved having his own way. He was almost insanely

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self-willed. It did his dark soul good to triumph over this "circus rider."

As Joel Mazarine preceded him, Orlando looked up at the window again. For one instant the beautiful, pale face of the girl-wife appeared, and then vanished.

At the doorway of the house Orlando Guise stumbled. That was an unusual thing to happen to him. He was too athletic to step carelessly, and yet he stumbled and giggled. It was not a fatuous giggle, however. In it were all kinds of strange things.

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CHAPTER V

ORLANDO HAS AN ADVENTURE

BURLINGAME had the best practice of any lawyer in Askatoon, although his character had its shady side. The prairie standards were not low; but tolerance is natural where the community is ready-made; where people from all points of the compass come together with all sorts of things behind them; where standards have at first no organized sanction. Financially Burlingame was honest enough, his defects being associated with those ancient sources of misconduct, wine and women—and in his case the morphia habit as well. It said much for his physique that, in spite of his indulgences, he not only remained a presentable figure but a lucky and successful lawyer.

Being something of a philosopher, the Young Doctor looked upon Burlingame chiefly as one of those inevitable vintages from a vineyard which, according to the favour or disfavour of Heaven, yields from the same soil both good and bad. He had none of that Puritanism which would ruthlessly root out the vines yielding the bad wine. To his mind that could only be done by the axe, the rope or the bullet. It seemed of little use, and very unfair, to drive the wolf out of your own garden into that of your neighbour. Therefore Burlingame must be endured.

The day after the Young Doctor had paid his professional visit to Tralee, and Orlando Guise had first seen the girl-wife of the behemoth, the Young Doctor

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visited Burlingame's office. Burlingame had only recently returned from England, whither he had gone on important legal business, which he had agreeably balanced by unguarded adventures in forbidden paths. He was in an animated mood. Three things had just happened which had given him great pleasure.

In the morning he had gained a verdict of acquittal in the case of one of the McMahon Gang for manslaughter connected with jumping a claim; and this meant increased reputation.

He had also got a letter from Orlando Guise, and a cheque for six thousand dollars, with instructions to pay the amount in cash to Joel Mazarine; and this meant a chance of meeting Mazarine and perhaps getting a new client.

Likewise he had received a letter of instructions from a client in Montreal, a kinsman and legatee of old Michael Turley, the late owner of Tralee, in connection with a legacy. This would involve some legal proceedings with considerable costs, and also contact with Joel Mazarine, whom he had not yet seen; for Mazarine had come while he was away in England.

His interest in Mazarine, however, was really an interest in Mrs. Mazarine, concerning whom he had heard things which stimulated his imagination. To him a woman was the supreme interest of existence, apart from making a necessary living. He was the primitive and pernicious hunter. He had been discreet enough not to question people too closely where Mazarine's wife was concerned, but there was, however, one gossip whom Burlingame questioned with some freedom. This was Patsy Kernaghan.

Before the Young Doctor arrived at his office this particular morning, Patsy, who had followed him from

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the Court-house, was put under a light and skilful cross-examination. He had been of service to Burlingame more than once; and he was regarded as a useful man to do odd jobs for his office, as for other offices in Askatoon.

"Aw, him—that murderin' moloch at Tralee!" exclaimed Patsy when the button was pressed. "That Methodys' fella with the face of a pirate! If there wasn't a better Protistan' than him in the world, the Meeting Houses'd be used for kindlin'-wood. Joel, they call him—a dacint prophet's name misused!

"I h'ard him praying once, as I stood outside the Meetin' House windys. To hear that holy hyena lift up his voice to the skies! Shure, I've niver been the same man since, for the voice of him says wan thing, and the look of him another. Sez I to meself, Mr. Burlingame, y'r anner, the minute I first saw him, sez I, 'Askatoon's no safe place for me.' Whin wan like that gits a footin' in a place, the locks can't be too manny to shut ye in whin ye want to sleep at night. That fella's got no pedigree, and if it wouldn't hurt some dacent woman, maybe, I'd say he was misbegotten. But still, I'll tell ye: out there at Tralee there's what'd have saved Sodom and Gomorrah—aye, that'd have saved Jerusalem, and there wouldn't ha' been a single moan from Jeremiah. Out at Tralee there's as beautiful a little lady as you'd want to see. Just a girl she is, not more than nineteen or twenty years of age. She's got a face that'd make ye want to lift the chorals an' the antiphones to her every marnin'. She's got the figure of one that was never to grow up, an' there she is the wedded wife of that crocodile great-grandfather.

"Aw, I know all about it, Mr. Burlingame, y'r anner. How do I know? Didn't Michael Turley tell me be-

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fore he died what sort o' man his cousin was? Didn't he tell me Joel Mazarine married first whin he was eighteen years of age; an' his daughter was married whin she was seventeen; an' her son was married whin he was eighteen—an' Joel's a great-grandfather now. An' see him out there with her that looks as if the kindergarten was the place for her."

"Do you go to Tralee often?" asked Burlingame.

"Aw yis. There's a job now and then to do. I'm ridin' an old moke on errands for him whin his hired folks is busy. A man must live, and there's that purty lass with the Irish eyes! Man alive, but it goes to me heart to luk at her."

"Well, I think I must have a 'luk' at her then," was Burlingame's half satirical remark.

Not long after Patsy Kernaghan had left Burlingame's office, the Young Doctor came. His business was brief, and he was about to leave when Burlingame said:

"The Mazarines out at Tralee—you know them? They came while I was away. Queer old goat, isn't he?"

"His exact place in natural history I'm not able to select," answered the Young Doctor dryly, "but I know him."

"And his wife—you know her?" asked Burlingame casually.

The other nodded. "Yes—in a professional way."

"Has she been sick?"

"She is ill now."

"What's the matter?"

"What's the truth about that McMahon claim-jumper who was acquitted this morning?" asked the Young Doctor with a quizzical eye and an acid note

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to his voice. "You've got your verdict, but you know the real truth, and you mustn't and won't tell it. Well?"

Burlingame saw. "Well, I'll have to ask the old goat myself," he said. "He's coming here to-day."

He took up Orlando Guise's letter from the table, glanced at it smilingly, and threw it down again.

"He must be a queer specimen," Burlingame continued. "He wouldn't take Orlando Guise's cheque yesterday. He says he'll only be paid in hard cash. He's coming here this afternoon to get it. He's a crank, whatever else he is. They tell me he doesn't keep a bank account. If he gets a cheque, he has it changed into cash. If he wants to send a cheque away, he buys one for cash from somebody. He pays for everything in cash, if he can. Actually, he hasn't a banking account in the place. Cash—nothing but cash! What do you think of that?"

The Young Doctor nodded: "Cash as a habit is useful. Every man must have his hobby, I suppose. Considering the crimes tried at the court in this town, Mazarine's got unusual faith in human nature; or else he feels himself pretty safe at Tralee."

"Thieves?" asked Burlingame satirically.

"Yes, I believe that's still the name, though judging from some of your talk in the Court-house, it's a word that gives opportunity to take cover. I hope your successful client of to-day, and his brothers, are not familiar with the ways of Mr. Mazarine. I hope they don't know about this six thousand dollars in cold cash."

A sneering, sour smile came to Burlingame's lips. The medical man's dry allusions touched him on the raw all too often.

"Oh, of course, I told them all about that six thou-

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sand dollars! Of course! A lot of people suspect those McMahons of being crooked. Well, it has never been proved. Until it's proved, they're entitled——" Burlingame paused.

"To the benefit of the doubt, eh?"

"Why not? I've heard you hold the balance pretty fair 'twixt your patients and the undertaker."

Quite unmoved, the Young Doctor coolly replied: "In your own happy phrase—of course! I get a commission from the undertaker when the patient's a poor man; when he's a rich man, I keep him alive! It pays. The difference between your friends the criminals and me is that probably nobody will ever be able to catch me out. But the McMahons, we'll get them yet,"—a stern, determined look came into his honest eye,—"yes, we'll get them yet. They're a nasty fringe on the skirts of Askatoon.

"But there it is as it is," he continued. "You take their dirty money, and I don't refuse pay when I'm called in to attend the worst man in the West, whoever he may be. Why, Burlingame, as your family physician, I shouldn't hesitate even to present my account against your estate if, in a tussle with the devil, he got you out of my hands."

Now a large and friendly smile covered his face. He liked hard hitting, but he also liked to take human nature as it was, and not to quarrel. Burlingame, on his part, had no desire for strife with the Young Doctor. He would make a very dangerous enemy. His return smile was a great effort, however. Ruefulness and exasperation were behind it.

The Young Doctor had only been gone a few minutes when Joel Mazarine entered Burlingame's office.

"I've come about that six thousand dollars Mr.

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Guise of Slow Down Ranch owes me," the old man said without any formal salutation. He was evidently not good-humoured.

At sight of Mazarine, Burlingame at once accepted the general verdict concerning him. That, however, would not prejudice him greatly. Burlingame had no moral sense. Mazarine's face might revolt him, but not his character.

"I've got the cash here for you, and I'll have in a witness and hand the money over at once," he said. "The receipt is ready. I assume you *are* Joel Mazarine," he added, in a weak attempt at being humorous.

"Get on with the business, Mister," said the old man surlily.

In a few moments he had the six thousand dollars in good government notes in two inner pockets of his shirt. It made him feel very warm and comfortable. His face almost relaxed into a smile when he bade Burlingame good-day.

Burlingame had said nothing about the letter from the late Michael Turley's kinsman in Montreal and the question of the legacy. This was deliberate on his part. He wanted an excuse to visit Tralee and see its mistress with his own eyes. He had attempted to pluck many flowers in his day, and had not been unsuccessful. Out at Tralee was evidently a rare orchid carefully shielded by the gardener.

As Mazarine left the lawyer's office, he met in the doorway that member of the McMahon family for whom Burlingame had secured a verdict of acquittal a couple of hours before. As was his custom, Mazarine gave the other a sharp, scrutinizing look, but he saw no one he knew; and he passed on. The furtive

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smile which had betrayed his content at pocketing the six thousand dollars still lingered at the corners of his mouth.

Though he did not know the legally innocent McMahon whom he had just passed, McMahon was not so ignorant. There was no one in all the countryside whom the McMahons did not know. It was their habit—or something else—to be familiar with the history of everybody thereabouts, although they lived secluded lives at Arrowhead Ranch, which adjoined that belonging to Orlando Guise.

When Tom McMahon saw Mazarine leave Burlingame's office, his furtive eye lighted. Then it was true, what he had heard from the hired girl at Slow Down Ranch: that old Mazarine was to receive six thousand dollars in cash from Orlando Guise by the hands of Burlingame! Only that very morning, at the moment of his own release from jail, his brother Bill McMahon had told him of the conversation overheard between Orlando and his mother, by Milly Gorst, the hired girl.

He turned and watched Mazarine go down the street and enter a barber's shop. If Mazarine was going to have his hair cut, he would be in the barber's shop for some time. With intense reflection in his eyes, McMahon entered Burlingame's office. He had come to settle up accounts for a clever piece of court-room work on the part of Burlingame. It was very well worth paying for liberally.

When he entered the office, Burlingame was not there. A clerk, however, informed him that Burlingame would be free within a few moments—and would he take a chair? Thereupon, the clerk left the room. McMahon took a chair—not the one towards which

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the clerk pointed him, but one beside the desk whereon were lying a number of open letters.

The interrogation always in the mind of a natural criminal, prompted McMahon to take a seat near the open letters. As soon as the clerk left the room, a hairy hand reached out for the nearest letter, and a swift glance took in its contents.

A grimly cheerful, vicious smile lighted up the heavily bearded face. Placing the letter on the desk again, as soon as it was read, McMahon almost threw himself over to the chair at some distance from the desk, which the clerk had first offered him. There he sat with his elbows on his knees and his chin in his hands when Burlingame entered the room.

Ten minutes later, with a receipted bill in his pocket, Tom McMahon made for the barber's shop which Mazarine had entered. He found it full, but seated in the red-plush chair, tipped back at a convenient angle, was Mazarine undergoing the triple operations of shaving his upper lip, beard-trimming and hair-cutting. From that moment and for the rest of all the long day and evening, Joel Mazarine commanded the unvarying interest of two members of the McMahon family.

Orlando Guise had had a long day, but one that somehow made him whistle or sing to himself most of the time. In a way, half a lifetime had gone since the day before, when he had first seen what he called to himself "the captive maid." He had never been so happy in his life; and yet he knew that he had not the faintest right to be happy. The girl who had so upset his self-control as to make him stumble on her door-step was the wife of another man. It was, of course,

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silly to call him "another man," because he seemed a million miles away from any sphere in which Orlando lived. Yet he was another man; and he was also the husband of the girl who had made Orlando feel for the very first time a strange singing in his veins. It actually was as though some wonderful, magnetic thing was making his veins throb and every nerve tingle and sing.

"It beats me," he said to himself fifty times that day.

He had never been in love. He did not know what it was like, except that he had seen it make men do silly things, just as drink did. He did not know whether he was in love or not. It was absurd that a man should be in love with a face at a window—a face with the beauty of a ghost rather than of a real live woman.

Orlando had little evil in his nature; his eyes did not look towards Tralee as did Burlingame's eyes. Nothing furtive stirred in Orlando's intensely blue eyes. Whatever the feeling was, it was an open thing, which had neither motive nor purpose behind it—just a thing almost feminine in its nature. As yet it was like the involuntary adoration which girls at a certain period of their lives feel successively for one hero after another. What it would become, who could tell? What would happen to the young girl adoring the actor, or the hero of the North Pole, the battle-field or the sea, if the adored one was not far off, but very near? Indeed, who could tell?

But as it was, in the upper room where Louise sat all day looking out over the prairie, and on the prairie where business carried Orlando from ranch to ranch on this perfect day, no recreant thought or feeling existed. Each was a simple soul, as yet unspoiled and

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in one sense unsophisticated—the girl, however, with an instinctive caution, such as an animal possesses in the presence of a foe with which it is in truce; the man with an astuteness which belonged to a native instinct for finding a way of doing hard things in the battle of life.

All day Orlando wondered when he should see that face again; all day the eyes of Louise pleaded for another look at the ranchman with the dress of a dandy, the laugh of a child, and the face of an Apollo—or so it seemed to her. It was the sort of day which ministers to human emotion, which stirs the sluggish blood, revives the drooping spirit. There was a curious, delicate blueness of the sky over which an infinitely more delicate veil of mist was softly drawn. At many places on the prairie the haymakers were loading the great wagons; here and there a fallow field was burning; yonder a house was building; cattle were being rounded up; and far off, like moving specks, ranchmen were climbing the hills where the wild bronchos were, for a day of the toughest, most thrilling sport which the world knows.

Night fell, and found Orlando making for the trail between what was known as the Company's Ranch and Tralee. To reach his own ranch, he had to cross it at an angle near the Tralee homestead. It was dark, with no moon, but the stars were bright.

As he crossed the Tralee trail, he suddenly heard a cry for help. Between him and where the sound came from was a fire burning. It was the camp-fire of some prairie pioneer making for a new settlement in the North; and beside it was a tent whose owner was absent in Askatoon.

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Orlando dug heels into his horse and rode for the point from which the cry for help had come. Something was undoubtedly wrong. The voice was that of one in real trouble—a hoarse, strangled sort of voice.

As he galloped through the light of the camp-fire, a pistol-shot rang out, and he felt a sharp, stinging pain in his side. Still urging his horse, he cleared the little circle of light and presently saw a man rapidly mounting a horse, while two others struggled on the ground.

He dashed forward. As he did so, one of the men on the ground freed himself, sprang to his feet, mounted his horse, and was away into the night with his companion. Orlando slid to the ground beside the figure which was slowly raising itself from the ground.

"What's the matter? Are you all right? Have they hurt you?" he asked, as he stooped over and caught the shoulders of the victim of the two fleeing figures.

At that instant there were two more pistol-shots, and a bullet hit the ground beside Orlando. Then he saw dimly the face of the man whom he was helping to his feet.

"Mazarine! Good Lord—Mazarine!" he said in an anxious voice. "What have they done to you?"

"Nothing—I'm all right. The dogs, the rogues, the thieves—but they didn't get it! It was in the pockets of my shirt." The old man was almost hysterical. "You just come in time, Mr. Guise. You frightened 'em off. They'd have found it, if it hadn't been for you."

"Found what?" asked Orlando, as he helped the old man towards the camp-fire, himself in pain, and a dizziness coming over him.

"Found your six thousand dollars that Burlingame paid me to-day," gasped the old man, spasmodically;

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"but it's here—it's here!" He caught at his breast with devouring greed.

Somehow the agitated joy of the old man revolted Orlando. He had a sudden rush of repulsion; but he fought it down.

"Are you all right?" he asked. "Are you all right?" Somehow the sound of his own voice was very weak.

"Yes, I'm all right," Mazarine said, and he called to his horse near by.

The horse did not stir, and the old man, whose breath came almost normally now, moved over and caught its bridle.

In a dazed kind of way, and with growing unsteadiness, Orlando walked towards the camp-fire. He was leaning against his horse, and opening his coat and waistcoat to find the wound in his side and staunch it with the kerchief from his neck, when Mazarine came up.

"What's that on your coat and breeches? Say, you're all bloody!" exclaimed Mazarine. "Why, they shot you!"

"Yes, they got me," was Orlando's husky reply, and he gave a funny little laugh. Giggling, people had called it.

"How are we going to get you home?" Mazarine asked. "You can't ride."

At that moment there was the rumbling jolt of a wagon. It was the pioneer-emigrant returning from Askatoon to his camp.

A few minutes later Orlando was lying on some bags in the emigrant's wagon, while Mazarine rode beside it.

"It's only a few hundred yards to the house," said the emigrant sympathetically, as he looked down at the now unconscious figure in the wagon.

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"It's four miles to his house," said Mazarine.

"Well, I'm not taking him four miles to his house or any house," said the emigrant. "My horse has had enough to-day, and the sooner the lad's attended to, the better. He's going to the nearest house, and that's Tralee, as they call it, just here."

"That's my house," gruffly replied the old man.

"Well, that's where you want him to go, ain't it?" asked the pioneer sharply. He could not understand the owner of Tralee.

"Yes, that's where I want him to go," replied Mazarine slowly.

"Then you ride ahead on the trail, and I'll follow," returned the other decisively.

"What's the matter? Who hurt him?" he presently called to Mazarine, riding in front.

"I'll tell you when we get to Tralee," answered the old man, with his eyes fixed on two lights in the near distance. One was in the kitchen, where a half-breed woman was giving supper to Li Choo, a faithful Chinaman roustabout; the other was in the room where a young wife sat with hands clasped, wondering why her husband did not return, yet glad that he did not.

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CHAPTER VI

"THINGS MUST HAPPEN"

BETWEEN two sunrises Louise Mazarine had seen her old world pass in a flash of flame and a new world trembling with a new life spread out before her; had come to know what her old world really was. The eyes with which she looked upon her new world had in them the glimmer not only of awakened feeling but of awakened understanding. To this time she had endured her aged husband as a slave comes to bear the lashes of his master, with pain which will be renewed and renewed, but pain only, and not the deeper torture of the soul; for she had never really grasped what their relations meant. To her it had all been part of the unavoidable misery of life. But on that sunny afternoon when Orlando Guise's voice first sounded in her ears, and his eyes looked into hers as, pale and ill, she gazed at him from the window, a revelation came to her of what the three years of life with Joel Mazarine had really been. From that moment until she heard the pioneer's wagon, escorted by her husband, bringing the unconscious Orlando Guise to her door, she had lived in a dream which seemed like a year of time to her.

Since the early morning of that very day, when Joel had leaned over her bed and asked her in his slow, grinding voice how she was, she had lived more than in all the past nineteen years of her life. The Young Doctor had come and gone, amazed at first, but presently with a look of apprehension in his eyes. There

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was not much trace of yesterday's illness in the alert, eager girl-wife, who twenty-four hours before had been really nearer to the end of all things than her aged husband. The Young Doctor knew all too well what the curious, throbbing light in her eyes meant. He knew that the gay and splendid Orlando Guise had made the sun for this prismatic radiance, and that the story of her life, which Louise had wished to tell him yesterday, would never now be told—for she would have no desire to tell it. The old vague misery, the ancient veiled torture, was behind her, and she was presently to suffer a new torture—but also a joy for which men and women have borne unspeakable things. No, Louise would never tell him the story of her life, because now she knew it was a thing which must not be told. Her mind understood things it had never known before. To be wise is to be secret, and she had learned some wisdom; and the Young Doctor wondered if the greater wisdom she must learn would be drunk from the cup of folly. Before he left her he had said to her with meaning in his voice:

"My dear young madam, your recovery is too rapid. It is not a cure: it is a miracle; and miracles are not easily understood. We must, therefore, make them understood; and so you will take regularly three times a day the powerful tonic I will give you."

She was about to interrupt him, but he waved a hand reprovingly and added with kindly irony:

"Yes, we both know you don't need a tonic out of a bottle; but it's just as well other people should think that the tonic bringing back the colour to your cheeks comes out of a bottle and not out of a health resort, called Slow Down Ranch, about four miles to the north-west of Tralee."

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As he said this, he looked straight into the eyes which seemed, as it were, to shrink into cover from what he was saying. But when, an instant afterwards, he took her hand and said good-bye, he knew by the trembling clasp of her fingers—even more appealing than they had yet been—that she understood.

So it was a few moments later, outside the house, he had said to Joel Mazarine that he had given his wife a powerful tonic, and he hoped to see an almost instant change in her condition; but she must have her room to herself for a time, according to his instructions of the day before, as she was nervous and needed solitude, to induce sleep. He was then about to start for Askatoon when the old man said:

"I suppose you won't have to come again, as she's going on all right."

To this the Young Doctor had replied firmly: "Yes, I'm coming out to-morrow. She's not fit yet to go to Askatoon, and I must see her once again."

"Oh, keep coming—that's right, keep coming!" answered the miserly old man, who still was not so miserly that he did not want his young wife blooming. "Coming to-morrow, eh!" he added, with something very like a sneer.

The other had a sudden flash of fury pass through his veins. The old Celtic quickness to resent insult swept over him. The ire of his forefathers waked in him. This outrageous old Caliban, to attempt to sneer at him! For an instant he was Kilkenny let loose, and then the cool, trained brain reasserted its mastery, and he replied:

"If there should be a turn for the worse, send for me to-night—not to-morrow!" And he looked the old man in the eyes with a steady, steelly glance which had

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nothing to do with the words he had just uttered, but was the challenge of a conquering spirit.

The Young Doctor had acted with an almost uncanny prescience. It was as though he had foreseen that Orlando Giuse would be carried upstairs to a room nearly opposite that of Louise, and laid unconscious on a bed, till he himself should come again that very night and extract a bullet from Orlando's side; that he would open Orlando's eyes to consciousness, hear Orlando say, "Where am I?" and note his startled look when told he was at Tralee.

Once during this visit, while making Orlando safe and comfortable, with the help of Li Choo, the Chinaman, and Rada, the half-breed, he had seen Louise for a moment. The old man had gone to the stables, and as he came out of the room where Orlando was, Louise's door opened softly on him. Dimly, in the half-darkness of her room, in which no light was burning, he saw her. She beckoned to him. Shutting the door of Orlando's bedroom behind him, he came quickly to her side and said:

"Go to bed at once, young woman. This will not do."

"I'm not sick now," she urged. "Say, I really am well again."

"You must not be well again so soon," he replied meaningly. "I want you to understand that you must not," he insisted.

There was a pause, which seemed interminable to the Young Doctor, who was listening for the heavy footstep of Joel Mazarine outside the house; and then at last in agitation Louise said to him:

"Will he get well? Rada told me he was shot saving Mr. Mazarine. Will he get well?"

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"Yes, he will get well, and quickly, if——"

He broke off, for there was the thud of a heavy footstep for which he had been listening. Joel Mazarine was returning.

"Won't they let me help nurse him?" she whispered.

The Young Doctor shook his head in negation.

"His mother will be here to-morrow," he said quickly. "Be wise, my child."

"You understand?" she whispered wistfully.

"I have no understanding. Go to bed," he answered sharply. "Shut the door at once."

When old Joel Mazarine's footsteps were heard upon the staircase again, Orlando was lying with half-closed eyes, watching, yet too weak to speak; and the Young Doctor was giving directions to Rada and Li Choo for the night-watch in Orlando's room. When Mazarine entered, the Young Doctor gave him a casual nod and went on with his directions. When he had finished, Rada said in her broken English, with an accent half-Indian, half-French:

"His mother you send for—yes? She come queeck. Some one must take care him when for me get breakfus and Li Choo do chores."

"We'll send for her in the morning," interrupted Joel Mazarine.

"Perhaps Mrs. Mazarine would be well enough to help a little in the morning," remarked the Young Doctor in a colourless voice. He knew when to be audacious; or, if he did not know, he had an instinct; and he noticed that the wounded man's eyelids did not even blink when he threw out the hint concerning Louise, while the eyes of the old man took on a sullen flame.

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"Mrs. Mazarine has to be molly-coddled herself—that's what you've taught her," he snarled.

"Well, then, send for Mrs. Guise to-night," commanded the Young Doctor.

He thought Joel Mazarine made unnecessary noise as he stamped down the staircase to send a farmhand to Slow Down Ranch; and he also thought that Orlando Guise showed discretion of manner and look in a moment of delicacy and difficulty. He knew, however, that, as the children say, "Things must happen."

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CHAPTER VII

"THE ZOOLYOGICAL GARDEN"

PATSY KERNAGHAN regarded Tralee as a kind of Lost Paradise, for the most part because it had passed from the hands of a son of the Catholic Church into those of the "prayin' Methodys," as he called them, and also because he had a "black heart ag'in" Joel Mazarine.

The spark was struck in him with some vigour one day at Tralee. It was caused by the flamboyant entrance of Mrs. Guise into the front garden, as the Young Doctor was getting into his buggy for the return journey to Askatoon, after attending Orlando, whose enforced visit to Tralee had already extended over a week.

"Aw, Doctor dear," said Patsy, as Orlando's mother fluttered into the garden like a gorgeous hen with wings outspread, her clothes a riot of contradictory colours, all of them insistently bright, "d'ye know what this place is—this terry firmy on which we stand, that's wan mile wan way, an' half a mile the other? Ye don't? Well, I'll tell ye: it's a zoolyogical gardin. Is it like a human bein' she is, the dear ould wumman there? Isn't she just some gay ould bird from the forests of the Equaytor, wherivir it is? Look at the beautiful little white curls hanging down her cheek, tied with ribbon—pink ribbon too—an' the bonnet on her head! Did ye iver see annything like it outside a zoolyogical gardin? Isn't it like the topknot of

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some fine old parakeet from Pernambukoko—and oh, Father Rainbow, the maginta dress of her! Now I tell you, Doctor dear, I tell you the truth, what I know! She wears hoops, she does, the same as y'r grandmother used to. An' the bit of rose ribbon round her waist, hanging down behind—now I ask y'r anner, is it like a wumman at all? See the face of her, with the little snappin' eyes an' the yellow beak of a nose, an' the sunset in her cheeks that's put on wid a painter's brush! Look at her trippin' about! Floatin'—shure, that's what she's doin'! If you listened hard, you'd hear her buzzin'. It's the truth I tell ye. D'ye follow me?"

The Young Doctor liked talking to Patsy Kernaghan better than to any other person in Askatoon. He was always sure to be stimulated by a new point of view, but he never failed to provoke Kernaghan by scepticism.

"One wild bird from 'Pernambukoko' does not make a zoölogical garden, Patsy," he said with an air of dissent.

"Well, that's true for you, Doctor dear," answered Kernaghan, "but this gardin's got a bunch of specimens for all that. Listen to me now. Did ye ever notice the likeness between the faces of people and of animals an' things that fly? You never did? Well, be thinkin' of it now. Ivry man and wumman here at Tralee looks like an animal or a bird in a zoölyogical gardin. Shure, there's no likeness between anny two of them; it's as if they was gathered from ivry corner of the wide wurruld. There's a Mongolian in the kitchen an' slitherin' about outside, doin' the things that's part for man and part for wumman. Li Choo they call him. Isn't his the face of a bald-

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headed baboon? An' the half-breed crature—she might ha' come from Patagony. An' the ould man Mazarine—part rhinoceros and part Methody, he is. An' what do ye be thinkin' of him they call Giggles, that almost guv his life to save the ould behemoth! Doesn't he remind you of the zebra, where the wild Hottentots come from—smart and handsome, but that showy, all stripes and tail and fetlock! D'ye unnerstand what I mean, y'r anner?"

"Have you finished calling names, Kernaghan?" asked the Young Doctor in a low tone. "Have you really finished your zoölogical list?"

Kernaghan's eye flashed. "Aw, Doctor dear," said he, "manny's the time in County Inniskillen, where you come from, you've seen a wild thing, bare-footed, springin' from stone to stone on the hillside, wid her hair flyin' behind like the daughter of a witch or somethin' only half human—so belongin' to the hills an' the bogs an' the *cromlechs* was she. Well, that's the maid that's mistress of Tralee—belongin' as much to the Gardin of Eden as to this place here. There's none of them here that belongs. Every wan of them's been caught away from where he ought to be into this zoolyogical gardin."

"Well, there's one good thing about a zoölogical garden, Patsy Kernaghan," said the Young Doctor; "it's generally a safe place for the birds and animals in it."

"But suppose some wan—suppose, now, the Keeper got drunk and let loose the popylashin' of the gardin upon each other, d'ye think would it be a Gardin of Eden?" Suddenly Patsy's manner changed. "Aw, I tell you this, then: I don't like what I see here, an' I like it less an' less ivry day."

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"What don't you like, Patsy?" asked the other quizzically.

"I don't like the way the old fella watches that child he calls his wife. I don't like the young fella bein' the cause of the old man's watchin'."

"What has happened? What has he done?" asked the Young Doctor a little anxiously.

"Divils me own, it isn't what he's done; it's his bein' here. It's his bein' what he is. It doesn't need *doin'* to bring wild youth together. Look at her, y'r anner! A week ago she was like wan that 'd be called to the Land of Canaan anny minnit. Wasn't you here tendin' her, as if she was steppin' intil her grave, an' look at her now! She's like a rose in the garden, like a lark's lilt in the air. What has done it? The young man's done it. You'll be tellin' the ould fella it's the tonic you've guv her. Tonic! How long d'ye think he'll belave it?"

"But she never sees Mr. Guise, does she, Patsy? Isn't his mother always with him? Hasn't Mazarine forbidden his wife to enter the room?"

Kernaghan threw out his hands. "An' you're the man they say's the cleverest steppin' between Winnipeg and the Mountains—an'—an'—you talk to me like that! Is the ould fella always in the house? Is he always upstairs? I ask you now. I'll tell you this, y'r anner——"

The Young Doctor interrupted him. "Don't you suppose that there's somebody always watching, Patsy—the half-breed, the Chinaman?"

Kernaghan snapped a finger. "Aw, must I be y'r schoolmaster in the days of your dotage! Of coorse the ould fella has someone to watch, an' I dunno which it is—the Chinaman or the half-breed wumman. But

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I'll tell you this: they'll take his pay and lie to him about whatever's goin' on inside the house. That girl has them both in the palms of her hands. Let him set what spies he will, she'll do what she wants, if the young man lets her."

"His mother——" interjected the Young Doctor.

"Her of the plumage—her! Shure, she's not livin' in this wurruld. She's only visitin' it. She's got no responsibility. If iver there was a child of a fairy tale, that wumman's the child. I belave she'd think her son was doin' right if he tied the ould fella up to a tree an' stuck him as full of Ingin arrows as a pin-cushion, an' rode off with the lovely little lady in beyant there. That's my mind about her. It isn't on her you can rely. If ye want the truth, y'r anner, them two young people have had words together and plenty of them, whether it's across the hall—her room from his; or in his room; or through the windy or down the chimney—shure, I don't care! They've spoke. There's that between them wants watchin'. Not that there's wrong in aither of them—divil a bit! I've got me own mind about Mr. Orlando Giggles. As for her, the purty thing, she doesn't know what wrong is—that's the worst of it!"

The Young Doctor tapped Kernaghan's head gently with his whip. "Patsy," said he, "you talk a lot. There's no greater talker between here and Donegal. But still I think you know what to say and whom to say it to."

Kernaghan's cap came off. He ran his fingers through his hair and looked at the other with a primitive intelligence which showed him to be what the Young Doctor knew him to be—better than his looks, or his place in the world, or his reputation.

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"Thank you kindly, y'r anner," he said, softly. "I'm troubled about things here, I am. That's why I spoke to ye. I'm afraid of the old fella, for his place is not in the pen wid that young thing, an' he'll break her heart, or kill her, if he gets to know the truth."

"What do you mean by 'the truth,' Patsy?" was the sharp query.

"I mean nothin' at all, save that in there wild youth is spakin' to wild youth—honest and dacint and true. But there's manny a tragedy comes out of that, y'r anner."

"Orlando has been sitting up for two days," said the Young Doctor meditatively, "and in two days more he can be removed. Patsy, you are staying on here. I know, and I trust you. The girl and the young man have both been my patients. I think as much of both of them as I can think of any man or woman. He's straight and——"

"But a girl's mad when the love-song rises in her heart," interjected Kernaghan.

"Yes, I know, Patsy, but it isn't so bad as you think. I had a talk with her to-day. Perhaps we can get him away to-morrow. Meanwhile, there can't much happen."

"Can't much happen, wid that ould wumman in the garden there, an' the young wife upstairs, an' the fine young fella sittin' alone in his room achin' for the sound of her voice! Shure, they're together at this minnit, p'r'aps."

The Young Doctor tapped Kernaghan again on the head with his whip. "You're a wild Irishman still," he said, "but I think none the worse of you for that. Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof. Keep your head, Patsy." And whipping up his horse, he nodded and drove on.

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It may be that Kernaghan's instinct was no truer than his own. It may be the Young Doctor knew Kernaghan's instinct to be true; and it also may be that what Kernaghan thought possible, the Young Doctor thought possible; but he also felt that things must be as they must be.

In any case Kernaghan was right; for while the little flamboyant lady from Slow Down Ranch was busy in the front garden, Louise Mazarine was with her wounded guest, with the man who had saved her husband's money and perhaps his life. The wounded guest regarded his wound as a blessing almost. Perhaps that was why he did not notice that his host had only been silently grateful.

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CHAPTER VIII

THE ORIENTAL WAY OF IT

ORLANDO GUISE'S mother was lacking in the caution which mothers generally have where their men-children are concerned. If she had had sense, she would have insisted on removing Orlando to Slow Down Ranch at the earliest possible moment, even at some risk to his physical well-being. She ought to have seen that Joel Mazarine was possessed of a jealousy as unreasoning as that of an animal; she ought to have discouraged Louise's kindnesses. If the kindnesses had been only the ordinary acts of a mistress of a house to a guest who had saved her husband's life—dishes made by her own hand, strengthening drinks, flowers picked and arranged by herself—there could have been no cause for nervousness. Each thing done by Louise, however, came from a personally and emotionally solicitous interest. It was to be seen in the glance of the eye, in the voice a little unsteady, in girlish over-emphasis, in that shining something in the face, which, in Ireland, they call the love-light.

So great was Mrs. Guise's vanity, so intense her content in her son, so proud was she of other people's admiration of him, no matter who they were, that she welcomed Louise's attentions. Kernaghan was wrong. Mazarine had not forbidden Louise to enter Orlando's room. That was the contradictory nature of the man. His innate savagery made him brood wickedly over her natural housewifery attentions to the

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man who had probably saved his own life, and certainly had saved him six thousand dollars; yet it was as though he must see the worst that might happen. must even encourage a danger which he dreaded. When the Methodist minister from Askatoon came to offer prayer for Orlando, Joel joined in it with all the unction of a class-leader, while every word of the prayer trembled in an atmosphere of hatred. As Patsy Kernaghan said, he himself watched, and he paid the Chinaman to watch, in the vain belief that money would secure faithful service.

The Young Doctor had told him that his powerful medicine had brought back the bloom to his young wife's cheeks and the light to her eyes, but how much he believed, he could not himself have said. One thing he did know: it was that Orlando seemed quite indifferent to everything except his mother, the state of the crops and the reports on his own cattle. Also Orlando had made a good impression when he resented with a funny little oath and a funnier little giggle, but with some heat in his cheek, Joel's ostentatious proposal to pay the Young Doctor's bill for attendance.

The offer had been made when Louise was standing in the doorway; but the old man did not notice that Louise coloured in sympathy with the flush in Orlando's face. It was as though a delicate nerve had been touched in each of them; but it was a nerve that had never been sensitive until they had met each other for the first time. Orlando's mother dealt with the situtation in her own way. She said in a somewhat awkward pause, following the old man's proposal, that a doctor's bill was a personal thing, and she would as soon allow some one else to pay it as to pay for her

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washing. At this Orlando giggled again, and ventured the remark that no doctor could dispense enough medicine in a year to pay her laundry bill for a month —which pleased the old lady greatly and impelled her to swing her skirt kittenishly.

It was at this point that Li Choo came knocking at the open door with a message for Mazarine. It related to a horse-accident at what was known as One Mile Spring; and Mazarine, having frowned his wife out of the doorway, made his way downstairs and prepared for his short journey to the Spring. Before he left, however, he called Li Choo aside, and what he said caused Li Choo to answer: "Me get money, me do job. Me keep eyes open. Me tell you."

From a window Louise had watched the colloquy, and she knew, as well as though she stood beside them, what was being said. Li Choo had told the truth: he had got the cash, and he would do the job. But not alone from Joel Mazarine did he get money. Only two mornings before, Louise, for all the extra work he had had to do during Orlando's illness and without thought of bribery, had given him a beautiful gold ten-dollar-piece with a hole in it. If the piece had been minus the hole, Li Choo would have returned it to her, for he would have served her for nothing till the end of his days, had it been possible. Because there was a hole in it, however, and he could put a string through it and wear it round his neck inside his waistcoat, he took it, blinking his beady eyes at her; and he said:

"Me watch most petic'ler, mlissy. Me tell boss Mazaline ev'lytling me see!" And he giggled almost as Orlando might have done.

After which Li Choo slip-slopped away to his work

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Their conversation was like that of two children. She talked of her bird Richard, which she had sent to him every morning that it might sing to him; of her black cat Nigger, which sat on his lap for many an hour of the day; of the dog Jumbo, which said its prayers for him to get well, for a piece of sugar—that was a trick Louise had taught it long ago. Orlando talked of his horses and of his mother—who, he declared, was the most unselfish person on the whole continent; how she only thought of him, and spent her money for him, and gave to him, never thinking of herself at all.

"She has the youngest heart of anyone in the world," said Orlando.

Louise did not even smile at that. No one with a heart that was not infantile could dress and talk as Orlando's mother dressed and talked; and so Louise said softly: "I am sure her heart is a thousand years younger than mine—or younger than mine was." And then she blushed, and Orlando blushed, for he understood what was in her mind—that until they two had met, she was, as the Young Doctor said, a victim to senile decay.

That was the nearest they had come as yet to saying anything which, being translated, as it were, through several languages, could mean love-making. Their love-making had only been by an inflection of the voice, by a soft abstraction, by a tuning of their

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behind the kitchen. When he saw Orlando's mother in the garden and the Young Doctor drive to Askatoon, and Patsy Kernaghan mount an aged cayuse and ride off, he clucked with his tongue and then went into the kitchen and prepared a tray on which he placed several pieces of a fine old set of China, which had belonged to Mazarine's grandmother and was greatly prized by the old man. Then he clucked to the half-breed woman, and she made ready as sumptuous a tea as ever entered the room of a convalescent.

Like a waiter at a seaside hotel, Li Choo carried the tray above his head on three fingers to the staircase, and as he mounted to the landing, called out, "Welly good tea me bling gen'l'man." This was his way of warning Orlando Guise, and whoever might be with him, of his coming.

He need not have done so, for though Louise was in Orlando's room, she was much nearer to the door than she was to Orlando. She hastened to place a table near to Orlando, for the tray which Li Choo had brought, and, as she did so, remarked with a shock at the cherished china upon the tray.

"Li Choo! Li Choo!" she gasped, reprovingly, for it was as though the Ark of the Covenant had been burgled. But Li Choo, clucking, slip-slopped out of the room and down the stairs as happy as an Oriental soul could be. What was in the far recesses of that soul, where these two young people were concerned, must remain unrevealed; but Li Choo and the half-breed woman in their own language—which was almost without words—clucked and grunted their understanding.

Left alone again, Louise found herself seated with only the table between herself and Orlando, pouring

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him tea and offering him white frosted cake like that dispensed at weddings; while Orlando chuckled his thanks and thought what a wonderful thing it was that a bullet in a man's side could bring the unexpected to pass and the heart's desire of a man within the touch of his fingers.

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spirits to each other. They were indeed like two children; and yet Li Choo was right when, in his dark soul, he conceived them to be lovers, and thought they would do what lovers do—hold hands and kiss and whisper, with never an end to a sentence, never a beginning.

It was not that these things were impossible to them. It was not that their beating pulses, and the throbbing in them, was not the ancient passion which has overturned an empire, or made a little spot of earth as dear as Heaven above. It was that these were forbidden things, and Louise and Orlando accepted that they were forbidden.

How long would this position last? What would the future bring? This was only the fluttering approach of two natures, from everlasting distances. The girl had been roused out of sleep; from her understanding the curtains had been flung back so that she might see. How long would it last, this simple, unsoiled story of two lives?

Orlando reached out his hand to put his cup back upon the tray. As her own hand was extended to take it, her fingers touched his. Then her face flushed, and a warm cloud seemed to bedim her eyes. There flashed into her mind the deep, overwhelming fact that for three long years a rough, heavy hand had held her captive by day, by night, in a pitiless ownership. She got to her feet suddenly; her breath came quickly, and she turned towards the door as though she meant to go.

At that instant Li Choo slid softly into the room, caught up the tray, poised it on his three fingers over his head and said: "Old Mazaline, lie come. Be queeck!"

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They heard the heavy footsteps of Joel Mazarine coming into the hall-way just below.

The old man, as though moved by some uncanny instinct, had come back from One Mile Spring by a roundabout trail. As the Chinaman came out upon the landing at the top of the stairs, Joel appeared at the bottom, in the doorway which gave upon the staircase. Two or three steps down shuffled the Chinaman; then, as it were by accident, he stumbled and fell, the tray with the beautiful china crashing down to the feet of Joel Mazarine, followed by the tumbling, chirruping Li Choo.

Oriental duplicity had made no wrong reckoning. The old man fell back into the hall-way from the crashing china and tumbling Oriental, who plunged out into the hall-way muttering and begging pardon, cursing his soul in good Chinese and bad English.

Looking down on the wreck, Mazarine saw his treasured porcelain shattered. With a growl of rage he stooped and seized Li Choo by the collar, flung him out of the door, and then with his heavy boot kicked him once, twice, thrice, a dozen times, anywhere, everywhere!

Li Choo, however, had done his work well. Joel Mazarine never knew the reason for the Chinaman's downfall on the stairway, for, in the turmoil, Louise had slipped away in safety. His rage had vented itself; but, if he had seen Li Choo's face an hour after, as he talked to the half-breed woman in the kitchen, he might have had some qualms for his cruel assault. Passion and hatred in the face of an Oriental are not lovely things to see.

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CHAPTER IX

THE STARS IN THEIR COURSES

"It's been a great day—great."

Orlando Guise leaned lazily on the neck of the broncho he was riding, peering between its ears, over the lonely prairie, to the sunset which was making beautiful the western sky. It was as though there was a golden fire behind vast hills of mauve and pink, purple and saffron; but the glow was so soft as to suggest a flame which did not burn; which only shed radiance, colour and an ethereal mist. All the width of land and life between was full of peace as far as eye could see. The plains were bountiful with golden harvest, and the activities of men were lost among the corn. Horses and cattle in the distance were as insects, and in the great concave sky stars still wan from the intolerant light of their master, the Sun, looked timidly out to see him burn his way down to the under-world.

"Great—but it might have been greater!" added Orlando, gazing intently at the sunset.

Yet, as he spoke, his eyes gazed at something infinitely farther away than the sunset—even to the goal of his desire. He was thinking that, great as the day had been, with all he had done and seen, it lacked a glimpse of the face he had not seen for a whole month. The voice, he had not heard it since it softly cried, "Oh, Orlando!" when the Chinaman crashed down the staircase with the tray of cherished porcelain, and had been maltreated by the owner of Tralee.

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How many times since then had those words rung in his ears! Louise had never called him by name save that once, and then it was the cry of a soul surprised, the wail of one who felt a heart-break coming on, the approach of merciless Fate. It was the companionship of trouble; it was the bird, pursued by a hawk, calling across the lonely valley to its mate. "Oh, Orlando!" He had waked in the morning with the words in his ears to make him face the day with hope and cheerfulness. It had sounded in his ears at night as he sat on the wide stoop watching the moon and listening to the night-birds, or vaguely heard his mother babbling things he did not hear.

It is a memorable moment for a man when he hears for the first time his "little name," as the French call it, spoken by the woman he loves. It is as the sound of a bell in the distance, a familiar note with a new meaning, revealing new things of life in the panorama of the mind. By those two words Orlando knew what was in the mind of Louise. They were a prayer for protection and a cry for comradeship.

When Louise first clasped hands with the Young Doctor on her arrival at Askatoon, the soft appeal of her fingers had made him understand that loneliness where she lived, and to bear which she sought help. But the "Oh, Orlando!" which was wrung from her, almost unknowingly, was the cry of one who, to loneliness, had added fear and tragedy. Yet behind the fear, tragedy and loneliness there was the revelation of a heart.

A courtship is a long or a short ceremonial or convention, a make-believe, by which people pretend that they slowly come to know and love each other; but lovers know that each understands the other by one

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note or inflection of the voice, by one little act of tenderness. These, or one of these, tell the whole story, the everlasting truth by which men and women learn how good at its worst life is, or speak the lightning-lie by which the bones of a dead world are exposed to the disillusioned soul.

This had been a great day, because, in it, physical being had joyously celebrated itself in a wild business of the hills; in air so fresh and sweet that it almost sparkled to the eye; in a sun that was hot, but did not punish; at a sport by which the earliest men in the earliest age of the world made life a rare sensation. The man who has not chased the wild pony in the hills with the lasso on his arm, riding, as they say in the West, "Hell for leather," down the steep hillside, over the rock and the rough land, balancing on his broncho with the dexterity of a bird or a baboon, has failed to find one of life's supreme pleasures.

In the foothills, many miles away from Slow Down Ranch and Tralee, there lived a herd of wild ponies, and it had been the ambition of a dozen ranchmen and broncho-busters thereabouts to capture one or many. More than once Orlando had seen a little gray broncho, with legs like the wrists of a lady, with a tail like a comet, frisking among the rocks and the brushwood, or standing alert, moveless and alone upon some promontory, and he had made up his mind that if, and when, there came a day of broncho-busting, he would become a hunter of the little gray mare. When the news came that the ranchmen for miles around were preparing for the drive of the hills, he determined to take part in it, against the commands of the Young Doctor, who said that he would run risk in doing so, for, though his wound was healed, he should still avoid strain and fatigue.

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There is no fatigue like that of broncho-busting. It is not galloping on the turf; it is being shaken and tossed in a saddle which the knees can never grip, on the back of something gone mad—for the maddest, wisest, carefullest thing on earth is a broncho, which itself was once a wild pony of the hills, and has been hunted down, thrown by the lasso, saddled, bridled and heart-broken all in an hour. When the broncho which was once a wild pony sets out on the chase after its own, there is nothing like it in the world; and so Orlando found.

The veteran broncho-busters and ranchmen gave him no vociferous welcome as he appeared among them. Had it not been for the reputation which he already gained for courage, such as he had shown in the recent affair when he had driven off the men who were robbing Joel Mazarine, and also for an idea, steadily spreading, that he was masquerading, and that behind all, was a curly-headed, intrepid, out-door "white man," he would not have had what he called a great day.

He could not throw the lasso as well as many another, but he could ride as well as any man that ever rode; and the broncho given him to ride that day was one sufficiently unreliable in character and sure-footed in travel to test him to the utmost. He had endured the test; he had even got his little gray mare, lassoing her like a veteran. He had helped to break her, and had sent her home from the improvised corral by one of his men. He had then parted from the others, who had dispersed to their various ranches with their prizes, and had ridden away on the broncho with which he had done such a good day's work. He had had the thrill of the hunter, riding like any wild Indian through

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the hills; he had had the throb of conquest in his veins; but while other men had shouted and happily blasphemed as they rode and captured, he had only giggled in excitement.

As he looked now into the sunset, he was thinking of the little gray mare, with the legs like the wrists of a lady and the soft, bright, wild eye, which had fought and fought to resist subjection; but which, overpowered by the stronger will of man, had yielded like a lady, and had been ridden away to Slow Down Ranch, its bucking over for ever, captive and subdued.

Orlando was picturing the little gray mare with Louise on its back. He had no right to think of Louise; yet there was never an hour in which he did not think of her. And Louise had no right to think of Orlando; yet, sleeping and waking, he was with her. Their homes were four miles apart, although, in one sense, they were a million miles apart by law and the convention which shuts a woman off from the love of men other than her husband; and yet in thought they were as near together always as though they had lain in the same cradle and grown up under the same roof-tree.

There was something about the gray pony, with the look of a captive in its eye, a wildness in subjection, like the girl at Tralee—the girl suddenly come to be woman, with her free soul born into understanding, yet who was as much a captive as though in prison, and guarded by a warder with a long beard, a carnivorous head, and boots greased with tallow.

Since they had parted, the day after Li Choo had averted a domestic "scene" or tragedy, the search had gone on by the Mounted Police—"the Riders of the Plains"—for the men who had attempted to rob

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Mazarine, and to put Orlando out of action by a bullet. Suspicion had been directed against the McMahons, but Joel Mazarine had declared that it was not the McMahons who had attacked him, although they were masked. There was nothing strange in that, because, as the Inspector of the Riders said: "That lot is too fly to do the job themselves; you bet they paid others to do it."

Orlando had no wish to see the criminals caught or punished. Somehow, secretly, he looked upon the assault and his wound as a blessing. It had brought him near to his other self, his mate in the scheme of things. There was something almost pagan and primitive, something near to the very beginning of things in what these two felt for each other. It was as though they really belonged to a world of lovers that "lived before the god of Love was born."

As Orlando sat watching the sunset, Louise's last words to him, "Oh, Orlando!" kept ringing in his ears. He thought of what had happened that very morning before he started for the hills. Soon after daybreak, Li Choo the Chinaman had come slip-slopping to him at Slow Down Ranch, and had said to him without any preliminaries, or any reason for his coming:

"I bling Mlissy Mazaline what you like. She cly. What you want me do, I do. That Mazaline, gloddam! I gloddam Mazaline!"

Orlando had no desire for intrigue, but Li Choo stood there waiting, and the devotion the Chinaman had shown made him tear a piece of paper from his pocket-book and write on it the one word "*Always.*" He then folded the paper up until it was no bigger than a waistcoat button, and gave it to Li Choo. Also, he offered a five-dollar bill, which Li Choo re-

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fused to take. When he persisted, the Chinaman opened his loose blue jacket and showed a ten-dollar gold-piece on a string around his neck.

"Mlissy Mazaline glive me that; it all plenty me," he said. "You want me come, I come. What you say do, I do. I say gloddam Mazaline!"

That scene came to Orlando's mind now, and it agitated him as the incident itself had not stirred him when it happened. The broncho he was riding, as though the disturbance in Orlando's breast had passed into its own wilful body, suddenly became restless to be off, and as Orlando gave no encouragement, showed signs of bucking.

At that moment Orlando saw in the distance, far north of both Tralee and Slow Down Ranch, a horse, ridden by a woman, galloping on the prairie. Presently as he watched the headlong gallop, the horse came down and the rider was thrown. He watched intently for a moment, and then he saw that the woman did not move, but lay still beside the fallen horse.

He dug his heels into the broncho's side, and although it had done its day's work, it reached out upon the trail as though fresh from the corral. It bucked malevolently as it went, but it went.

It was apparent that no one else had seen the accident. Orlando had been at a point of vantage on a lonely rise about eighty feet above the level of the prairie. Where horse and rider lay was a good two miles, but within seven minutes he had reached the spot.

Flinging the bridle over the broncho's neck, he dismounted. As he did so, a cry broke from him. It was, as it were, an answer to the "Oh, Orlando!" which had been ringing in his ears. There, lying upon the

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ground beside the horse, with its broken leg caught in a gopher's hole, was Louise.

Orlando's ruddy face turned white; something seemed to blind him for an instant, and then he was on his knees beside her, lifting up her head, feeling her heart. Presently the colour came back to his face with a rush. Her heart was beating; her pulse trembled under his fingers; she was only unconscious. But was there other injury? Was arm or leg broken? He called to her. Then with an exclamation of self-reproach, he laid her down again on the ground, ran to his broncho, caught the water-bottle from the saddle, lifted her head, and poured some water between the white lips.

Presently her eyes opened, and she stared confusedly at Orlando, unable to realize what had happened. Then memory came back, and with it her very life-blood seemed to flow like water through the opening gates of a flume, with all the weight of the river behind. As her face flooded, she shivered with emotion. She was resting against his knee; her head was upon his arm; his face was very near; and there was that in his eyes which told a story that any woman, loving, would be thrilled at seeing. What restrained him from clasping her to his breast? What kept her arms by her side?

The sun was gone, leaving only a glimmer behind; the swift twilight of the prairie was drawing down. Warm currents of air were passing like waves of a sea of breath over the wide plains; the stars were softly stinging the sky, and a bright moon was asserting itself in the growing dusk. Here they were who, without words or acts, had been to each other what Adam and Eve were in the Garden, without furtiveness, and guiltless of secret acts which poison Love. What restrained

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them was native, childlike *camaraderie*, intense, unusual and strange. The world would call them romancists, if they believed that this restraint could be. But there was something more. With all their frank childlikeness, there was also a shyness, a reserve, which would not have been, if either had ever eaten of the Fruit of Understanding until they met each other for the first time.

"Are you—are you hurt?" he asked, his voice calmer than his spirit, his heart beating terribly hard.

"I'm all right," she answered. "I fell soft. You see, I'm very light."

"No bones broken? Are you sure?" he asked solicitously.

She sat erect, drawing away from his arms and the support of his knee. "Don't you see my legs and arms are all right! Help me up, please," she added, and stretched out a hand.

Then, all at once, she saw the horse lying near. Again she shivered, and her hand was thrown out in a gesture of pain.

"Oh, see—see!" she cried. "His leg is broken."

She loved animals far more than human beings. There were good reasons for it. She had fared hard in life at the hands of men and women, because the only ones with whom, in her seclusion, she had had to do, had sacrificed her, all save one—the man beside her. Animal life had something in it akin to her own voiceless being. Her spirit had never been vocal until Orlando came.

"Oh, how wicked I've been!" she cried. . . . "I couldn't bear it any longer. *He* wouldn't let me ride alone, go anywhere alone. I had to do it. I'd never ridden this horse before. My own mare wasn't fit.

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See—see. It's my ankle that ought to be broken, not his."

Orlando got to his feet. "Look the other way," he said. "Turn round, please. I'll put him out of pain. He bolted with you, and he'd have killed you, if he could; but that doesn't matter. He can't be saved. Turn round, don't look this way."

She had been commanded to do things all her life, first by her mother, tyrant-hearted and selfish, and then by her husband, an overlord, with a savage soul; and she had obeyed always, because she always seemed to be in the grasp of something against which no pressure could avail. She was being commanded now, but there was that in the voice which, while commanding her, made her long to do as she was bid. It was an obedience filled with passion, resigning itself to the will of a force which was all gentleness, but oh, so compelling!

She buried her face in her hands, and presently Orlando had opened a vein in the chestnut's neck, and its life-blood slowly ebbed away.

As he turned towards her again, Orlando was startled by a sudden action on the part of his broncho. Whether it was the smell of blood which frightened it, or death itself, which has its own terrors to animal life, or whether it was as though a naked, shivering animal soul passed by, the broncho started, shied and presently broke into a trot; then, before Orlando could reach it, into a gallop, and was away down the prairie in the direction of Slow Down Ranch.

"That's queer," he said, and he gave a nervous little laugh. "It's the worst of luck, and—and we're twelve miles from Tralee," he added slowly.

"It's terrible!" Louise said, her fingers twisting to-

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gether in an effort at self-control. "Don't you see how terrible it is?" she asked, looking into Orlando's troubled face but cheerful eyes.

"You couldn't walk that distance, of course," he remarked.

She endeavoured to get to her feet, but seemed to give way. He reached out his hands. She took them, and he helped her up. His face was anxious.

"Are you sure you're not hurt?" he asked.

"There's nothing broken," she answered. "No bones, anyway. But I don't feel——" She swayed. He put an arm around her.

"I don't feel as if I could walk even a mile," she continued. "It's shaken me so."

"Or else you're hurt badly inside," he said apprehensively.

"No, no, I'm sure not," she answered. "It's only the shock."

"Can you walk a little?" he asked. "This poor horse—let's get away from it. There's a good place over there—see!" He pointed to a little rise in the ground where were a few stunted trees and some long grass and shrubs. "Can you walk?"

"Oh, yes, I'm all right," she answered nervously. "I don't need your arm. I can walk by myself."

"I think not—well, not yet, anyhow," he answered soothingly. "Please do as you're told. I'm keeping my arm around you for the present."

Always in the past she had obeyed, when commanded by her mother or husband, with an apathy which had smothered her youth. Now her youth seemed to drink eagerly a cup of obedience—as though it were the wine of life itself. She even longed to obey the voice whispering in her soul from ever so far away: "Close—close to him! Home is in his arms."

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With all her unconscious revelation of herself, however, there was that in her which was pure maidenliness. For, married as she was, she had never in any real sense been a wife, or truly understood what wifedom meant, or heard in her heart the call of the cradle. She had been the victim of possession, which had meant no more to her than to be, as it were, subjected daily to the milder tortures of the Inquisition.

Yet she knew and could realize to the full that a power which had her in control, which possessed her by the rights of the law, prevented her—and would prevent her by whatever torture was possible—from friendship, alliance, or whatever it might be, with Orlando. She knew the law: one wife to one husband; and the wife to look neither to the right nor to the left, to the east nor to the west, to the north nor to the south, but to remain, and be constant in remaining, the helpmeet, the housewife, the sole property of her husband, no matter what that husband might be —vinous, vicious, vagrant, vengeful or any other things, good or bad.

"Why don't you look glad when you see me come in?" Joel Mazarine remarked to her suddenly the day before. "If you'd had some husbands, you might have reason for bein' the statue and the dummy you are. Am I a drunkard? Am I a thief? Am I a nighthawk? Do I go off lookin' for other women? Don't I keep the commandments? Ain't you got a home here as good as any in the land? Didn't I take you out of poverty, and make you head of all this, with people to wait on you and all the rest of it?"

That was the way he had talked, and somehow she had not seemed able to bear it; and she had said to him,

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in unexpected revolt, that her tongue was her own, and what was in her mind was her own, even if her body wasn't.

Then, in a fury, he had caught his riding-whip from the wall to lash her with it, just when Li Choo the Chinaman appeared with a message which he delivered at the appropriate moment, though he had had it to deliver for some time. It was to the effect that the Clerk of the Court in the neighbouring town of Waterway wished to see him at once on urgent business. The message had been left by a rancher in passing.

As Li Choo delivered the word, he managed to put himself between Mazarine and his wife in such a way as to enrage the old man, who struck the Chinaman twice savagely across the shoulders with the whip, and then stamped out of the house, invoking God to punish the rebellious and the heathen, while Li Choo, shrinking still from the cruel blows, clucked in his throat. There was something in the sound which belonged to the abyss dividing the Eastern from the Western races.

That night Louise had refused to go to bed; but at last, fearing physical force, had obeyed, and had lain with her face to the wall, close up to it, letting the cold plaster cool her hot palms, for now she burned with a fire which was consuming the debris of an old life—the fire of knowledge, for which she had to pay so heavily.

"You couldn't walk even a little of the way to Tralee, could you?" asked Orlando, when they had reached a shrub-covered hillock.

"No, I couldn't walk it, I'm so shaken. I'm terribly

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weak; I tremble all over," she added, as she sat down upon a stone. "But if I don't—if I don't go back—oh, you know!"

"Yes, I know," answered Orlando. "He's the sort that would horsewhip a woman."

"He started to do it yesterday," she answered, "but Li Choo came in time, and he horsewhipped Li Choo instead."

"I wouldn't myself be horsewhipping Chinamen much," said Orlando. "They're a queer lot."

Suddenly she got to her feet. "I won't stand it. I won't stand it any longer," she cried. "That is why to-day, although he told me I mustn't ride, I took that new chestnut, and saddled it and rode—I didn't care where I rode. I didn't care how fast the horse went. I didn't care what happened to me. And here I am, and— But oh, I do care what happens to me!" she added, her voice breaking. "I'm—I'm frightened of him—I'm frightened, in spite of myself. . . . He doesn't treat me right," she added. "And I'm terribly frightened."

She raised her eyes to Orlando's face in the growing dusk—there is no twilight in that prairie land—and there was that in it which made her feel that she must not give way any further. In Orlando's veins was Southern sap, mixed with Northern blood; in Orlando's eyes was a sudden look belonging to that which defies the law.

"Don't—don't look like that," she exclaimed. "Oh, Orlando!"

Once more he heard her speak his name, and it was like salve to a wound. He put a hand upon himself.

"I'll go to Tralee," he said, "if you don't mind waiting here alone."

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"I can't. I will not wait alone. If you go, then I'll go too somehow. . . . It's twelve miles. You couldn't get there till midnight, and you couldn't get back here with a wagon for another couple of hours from that. It would be daylight then. I can't stay here alone. I'm frightened, and I'm cold."

"Wait a minute," said Orlando.

He ran back to the dead horse, unloosed the saddle from its back, detached from it a rain-coat strapped to the pommel, and brought it to her.

"This will keep you warm," he said. "It isn't cold to-night. You only feel cold because you're upset and nervous."

"I'm frightened," she answered; "frightened of everything. Listen! Don't you hear something stirring—there!" She peered fearfully into the dusk behind them.

"Probably," he answered. "There are lots of prairie dogs and things about. The more you listen, the more you hear on the prairie, especially at night."

There was silence for a moment, and then he added: "My broncho'll steer straight for Slow Down Ranch, and that'll bring my men. You can be quite sure there'll be a search-party out from Tralee, too, at the first streak of dawn. You can't make the journey, so the only thing to be done is to wait here. That coat will keep you from getting cold, and I'll cut a lot of long grass and make you a bed here. Also, the grass is warm, and I'll cover you with it and with pine branches."

"I can't lie down," she answered. "No, I can't; I'm afraid. It's all so strange, and to-morrow, he——"

"There's nothing to be frightened about," he interrupted. "Nothing at all, Louise."

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It was the first time he had ever addressed her by name, and it made her shiver with a new feeling. It seemed to tell a long, long story without words.

"You must do what I ask you to do—whatever I ask you to do," he repeated. "Will you?"

"Yes, anything you ask me I'll do," she answered, and then added quickly, "For you won't ask me to do anything I don't want to do. That's the difference. You understand, Orlando."

A few minutes later he had found a suitable place to make a kind of bed of grass for her, and had prepared it, with his knife, cutting the branches of small shrubs and grass and the scanty branches of the pine. When it was finished, he came to her and said:

"It's all ready. Come and lie down, and I'll cover you up."

She got to her feet slowly, for she was in pain greater than she knew, so absorbed was her mind in this new life suddenly enveloping her, and then she said in a low voice: "No, not yet; I can't yet. I want to sit here. I've never felt the night like this before. It's wonderful, and I'm not nearly so cold now. I know I oughtn't to be cold at all, in the middle of summer like this."

She paused, and seemed lost in contemplation of the sky. After a moment she added: "I never knew I could feel so far away from all the world as I do to-night. But the sky seems so near, and the moon and the stars so friendly."

"You haven't slept out of doors as I have hundreds of times," he answered. "The night and I are brothers; the stars are my little cousins; and the moon"—he giggled in his boyish way—"is my maiden aunt. She's so prudish and so kind and friendly, as you say. She's like an aunt I had—Aunt Samantha. She was my

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father's sister. I used to love her to visit my mother. She always brought me things, and she gave them to me as if they were on silver dishes—like a ceremony. She was so prim, I used to call her Aunt Primrose. She made me feel as if I could do anything I liked and break any law I pleased. But all the time, like a saint in a stained-glass window, she always seemed to be saying, 'Yes, you'd like to, but you mustn't.' She was just like the moon. I'm well acquainted with the moon, and——"

"Hush!" Louise interrupted. "Don't you hear something stirring—there, behind us?"

He laughed. "Of course something's always 'stirring behind us' on the prairie, and things you can't hear at all in the day are almost loud at night. There are thousands of sounds that never get to your ears when the sun is busy, but when Aunt Primrose Moon is saying, 'Hush! Hush!' to the naughty children of this world, you can hear a whole new population at work, cracking away like mad. Say, ain't I letting myself go to-night?" he added, giggling again and sitting down beside her. "I'm going to give you just half an hour, and at the end of that half-hour you've got to go to sleep."

"I can't—I can't," she said scarcely above a whisper.

As though in response to an unspoken thought, he said casually: "I'm going to walk awhile when you've lain down, and then—" He pointed to a spot about twenty yards away. "Do you see the two big stones there? Well, when I've finished my walk and my talk with Aunty Primrose"—he laughed up at the moon—"I'm going to sit down there and snooze till daylight." He pointed again: "Right over there beside those two rocks. That's my bed. Do you see?"

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She did not reply at once, but a long sigh came from her lips. "You'll be cold," she said.

"No, it's a hot night," he answered. "I'm too hot as it is." And he loosened his heavy red shirt at the throat.

"If I've got to go to bed in half an hour," she said presently, "tell me more about your Aunt Samantha, and about yourself, and your home before you came out here, and what you did when you were a little boy —tell me everything about yourself."

She was forgetting Tralee for the moment, and the man who raised his hand against her yesterday, and the life she had lived. Or was it only that she had grown young during these last two months, and the young can so easily forget!

"You want to hear? You really want to hear?" he asked. "Say, it won't be a very interesting story. Better let me tell you about the broncho-busting to-day."

"No, I want to hear about yourself." She looked intently at him for an instant, and then her eyes closed and the long lashes touched her cheek. There was something very wilful in her beauty, and her body too had delicate, melancholy lines strange in one so young. She was not conscious that, in her dreamy abstraction, she was leaning towards him.

It was but an instant, though it seemed to him an interminable time, in which he fought the fierce desire to clasp her in his arms, and kiss the lips which, to his ears, said things more wonderful than he had ever dreamed of in his friendship with the night and the primrose moon. He knew, however, that if he did, she would not go back to Tralee to-morrow; that to-morrow she would defy the leviathan; and that to-

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morrow he would not have the courage to say the things he must say to the evil-hearted master of Tralee, who, he knew, would challenge them with ugly accusations. He must be able to look old Mazarine fearlessly in the face; he would not be the slave of opportunity. He was going to fight clean. She was here beside him in the warm loneliness of the northern world, and he was full-grown in body and brain, with all the human emotions alive in him; yet he would fight clean.

Not for a half-hour, but for nearly an hour he told her what she wished to know, while she listened in a happy dream; and when at last she lay down, she refused his coverlet of dry grass, saying that she was quite warm. She declared that she did not even need the coat he had taken from the saddle of the dead horse, but he wrapped it around her, and, saying "Goodnight" almost brusquely, marched away in the light of the dying moon.

The night wore on. At first Louise's ears were sensitive to every sound, and there were stirrings in the hillock by which she slept, but she comforted herself with the thought that they were the stirrings of lonely little waifs of nature like herself. Though she dared not let the thought take form, yet she feared, too, the sound of human footsteps. By and by, however, in the sweet quiet of the night and the somnolent light of the moon, sleep captured her. When at last Orlando's footsteps did crush the dry grass, the sound failed to reach her ears, for it was then not very far from daylight, and she had slept for several hours. Sleep had not touched Orlando's eyes when, sitting down by the stones which were to mark his resting-place, he waited for Louise to wake.

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CHAPTER X

THE MOON WAS NOT ALONE

Out on the prairie under the light of the stars a man had fought the first great battle of his life, and had emerged victorious. There are no drawn battles in the struggles of the soul. As Orlando fought, he was tortured by the thought that none would believe the truth to-morrow when it was told; and that there would be penalty though there was no crime.

As for Louise, she could have returned, almost blindly defiant, to her world, hand in hand with Orlando; and yet, when morning came, and her eyes opened on the prairie at day-break, with life stirring everywhere, she was glad of the victory—though the shadow of a great trouble to come was showing in her eyes.

She knew what she had to face at Tralee, and that she had no proof of her perfect innocence. It was of little use for them to call upon Heaven to witness what the night had been; and Joel Mazarine, who distrusted every man and woman, would distrust her with a sternness which guilt only could effectively defy!

Orlando's enforced gaiety as he invited her to a breakfast of a couple of biscuits, left from yesterday's broncho-busting, heartened her; yet both were conscious of the make-believe. They realized they were helpless in the grip of harsh circumstance. It was almost enough to make them take advantage of calumny

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and the traps set for them by Fate, and join hands for ever.

As they looked into each other's eyes, the same hopeless yet reckless thought flickered—flickered, and vanished. Yet as they looked out over the prairie towards Tralee, to which Louise must presently return, a rebellious sort of joy possessed them.

The discord of their thoughts was like music beside what had passed at Tralee. There nothing relieved the black, sullen rage of Joel Mazarine. He had returned to the house where his voice had always been able to summon his slaves, and to know that they would come—Chinaman, half-breed, wife. Now he called, and the wife did not come. On the new chestnut she had ridden away on the prairie, so the half-breed woman had said, as hard as he could go. He had scanned the prairie till night came, without seeing a sign of her.

His black imagination instantly conceived the worst that Louise might do. It was not in him ever to have the decent alternative. He questioned the half-breed woman closely; he savagely interrogated the Chinaman; and then he declared that they lied to him, that they knew more than they said; and when he was unable to bear it any longer, he mounted his horse and galloped over to Slow Down Ranch. As he went, he kept swearing to himself that Louise had flown thither; and anger made his brain malignant. He could scarcely frame his words intelligibly when he arrived at Slow Down Ranch.

There he was presently convinced that his worst suspicions were true, for Orlando also had not returned. He saw it all. They had agreed to meet; they had

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met; they had eloped and were gone! His beady eyes were those of serpents watching for the instant to strike, and his words burst over the head of Orlando's mother like shrapnel.

For once, however, the futile, fantastic mother rose higher than herself, and declared that her son had never run away from, or with, anything in his life; that he—Joel Mazarine—had never had anything worth her son's running away with; and that her son, when he came back, would make him ask forgiveness as he had never asked it of his God.

Indeed, the gaudy little lady stood in her doorway and chattered her maledictions after him, as he rode back again towards Tralee muttering curses which no class leader in the Methodist Church ought even to quote for pious purposes.

Joel Mazarine had flattered himself that he had everything life could give—money, property and a garden of youth in which his old age could loiter and be glad; and that he should be defied suddenly and his garden made desolate, that the lines of his good fortune should be crossed, caused him to rage like any heathen. His monstrous egotism made him like some infuriated bull in the arena, with the *banderillos* sticking in his hot hide.

The two people whom he cursed were in Elysium compared to the place where he tortured himself. There are desert birds that silently surround a rattlesnake, as he sleeps, with little bundles of cactus-heads and their million needles, so that, when the reptile wakes, it cannot escape through the palisade of bristling weapons by which it is surrounded; and in ghoulish anger it strikes its fangs into its own body until it dies. Just such a helpless rage held Joel Mazarine,

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and his religion did not suggest seeking comfort at that Throne of Grace to which he had so publicly prayed on occasions.

Night held him prowling in his own coverts; morning found him yellow and mottled, malicious, but now silent. He somehow felt that he would know the truth and the whole truth soon. He ate his pork and beans for breakfast with the appetite of a ravenous animal. He put pieces of the pork chop in his mouth with his fingers; he gulped his coffee; but all the time he kept his eyes on the open door, as though he expected some messenger to announce that Providence had stricken his rebellious wife by sudden death. It seemed to him that Nature and Jehovah must unite to avenge him.

After three hours of further waiting he determined to go into Askatoon. He would have bills printed advertising for Louise as he had done for stray cattle; he would have notices put in the newspapers proclaiming that his wife was strayed or stolen and must be put in pound when discovered. At the moment he decided thus, he caught sight of a wagon approaching from the north. It was near enough for him to see that there was a woman in it; and the eyes of the half-breed hired woman, possessing the Indian far-sight, saw that it was Louise, and told her master so.

Ten minutes later Louise stood in front of the Master of Tralee, and the Master of Tralee filled the doorway.

"What you want here?" he asked of her with blurred rage in his voice.

"I want to go to my room," Louise answered quietly but firmly. "Please stand aside."

Now that Louise was face to face with her foe, a new spirit had suddenly possessed her; and standing be-

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side his broncho, a hand on its neck, Orlando almost smiled, for this was Louise with a new nature. There was defiance and courage in her face, not the apprehension which had almost overwhelmed her as they started back to Tralee, having been rescued by the search-party from Slow Down Ranch. The night had done something to Louise which was making itself felt.

"You think you can come back here after what you've done—after where you've been—the likes of you!" Mazarine snarled unmoving. "You think you can!"

Louise turned swiftly to look at Orlando and the three men, one riding and two in the wagon, as though to call them in evidence of her innocence; but there came to her eyes a sudden fire of courage, and she turned again to Mazarine and said:

"I'm your wife by the law—just as much your wife to-day as yesterday. You treat me before strangers as if I were a criminal. I'm not going to be treated that way. I've got my rights. Stand back and let me in—stand back, Joel Mazarine," she said, and she took a step forward, child though she was, as if she would strike him. Something had transformed her.

To Orlando she seemed scarcely real. The shrinking, colourless child of a few weeks had suddenly become a woman—and such a woman!

"I'll tell you in my own time where I've been and what I've done," she continued. "I want to go upstairs. Stand out of the doorway."

There was a movement behind her. A man in the wagon and the one on his horse seemed to grow angry and threatening. The ranchman dropped from his horse. Only Orlando stood cool, quiet and ominously watchful. Mazarine did not fail to notice the movement of the two men.

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Presently Orlando's voice said slowly and calmly: "Stand back, Mazarine. Let her go to her room. This is a free country, and she's free in her own house. It's her house until you've proved she's got no right there." Then he added with sharp insistence and menace: "Stand back—damn you, Mazarine!"

Orlando did not move as he spoke, but there was a look in his face which an enemy would not care to see.

Mazarine, in spite of his rage, quailed before the sharp, menacing voice so little in tune with its reputation for giggling, and stepping back, he let Louise pass. Then he plunged forward out of the doorway.

"That's right. Come outside," said Orlando scornfully. "Come out into the open." His voice became lower. There was something deadly in it, boy as he was. "Come out, you hypocrite, and listen to what I've got to say. Listen to the truth I've got to tell you. If you don't listen, I'll horsewhip you, that'd horsewhip a woman, till you can't stand—you loathsome old dog. . . . Yes, he took his horsewhip to her yesterday," he added to the spectators, who muttered angrily, for the West is chivalrous towards women.

Something near to madness possessed Orlando. No one had ever seen him as he was at that moment. Down through generations had come to him some iron thing that suddenly revealed itself in him, as something had just suddenly revealed itself in Louise.

The other three men—two in the wagon and one beside his horse—stared at him as though they had seen him for the first time. They were unready for the passion that possessed him. Not a muscle of his body appeared to move; he was as motionless as the trunk of a tree. But in his eyes and his voice there was, as

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one of the ranchers said afterwards, "Hell—and then some more."

"Listen to me," he said again, and his voice was low and husky now. "Yesterday I was broncho-busting——"

Thereupon he told the whole story of what had happened since he had seen Louise thrown from her chestnut on the prairie. He told how Louise was too shaken and ill to attempt the journey back to Tralee, and how they had camped where they were, near the dead horse.

As Orlando talked, the old man was seized by terrible hatred and jealousy. "You needn't tell me the rest," he broke in, his hands savagely opening and shutting. "I guess I understand everything."

The words had scarcely left his mouth when from the wagon a man said: "Wait—wait, Mister. I got something to say."

He sprang to the ground, and ran between Mazarine and Orlando.

"This is where I come in," he said, as Louise's face appeared at an upper window, and she listened. "You don't know me. Well, I know you. Everybody knows you, and nobody likes you. I know what happened last night. I'm a brother of your fellow Christian Rigby, the druggist, over there in Askatoon. He's a Methodist. I'm not. I'm only good. I been a lot o' things, and nothing in the end. Well, you hearken to my tale.

"I was tramping with my bundle on my back acrost the prairie to Askatoon from Waterway. I'm a sundowner, as they say in Australia. When the sun goes down, I down to my bed wherever I be on the prairie. I was asleep—I'd been half drunk—when the chest-

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nut threw your wife and broke its leg; but I was awake when he rode up." He pointed to Orlando. "I was awake, and so I watched. I knew who she was; I knew who he was." He pointed to Orlando again. "I guessed I'd see something. I did.

"I watched them two people all night. There was a moon. I could see. I wasn't fifteen feet from her all night, and I jined the others when they come to rescue. I guess I got the truth, and I guess if you want any evidence about me you can get it. Lots of people know me out here. I ain't got any house or any home, and I get drunk sometimes, and I ain't got money to buy meals with, lots of times, but nobody ever knowed me lie. That's what ruined me—I been too truthful. Well, I'm not lying now, Mister. I'm telling you the God-help-me truth. He's a gentleman." He pointed again to Orlando. "He's a gentleman from away back in God's country, wherever that is, and she's the best of the best of the very best.

"You can bet your greasy old boots and ugly face that you've got a bigger fortune in that wife of yours than you've any right to. Say, she's a queen, Mister, and don't you forget it, and"—he drawled out his words—"you go inside your house and get down on your knees, same as you do in the Meeting House, and thank the Lord you love so well for all his blessings. As my friend here said a little while back"—he pointed to Orlando again—"'Damn you, Mazarine!' Go and hide yourself."

The old man stood for a moment dumbfounded; then, without a word, he turned and hunched inside the house.

"He raised his horsewhip ag'in' a woman, did he?"

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said one of Orlando's ranchmen. "Ain't that a matter we got to take notice of?"

"Boys," said Orlando as he motioned them to be off, "Mrs. Mazarine can take care of herself. You'll forget what's happened, if you want to play up to her. If she needs you, she'll be sure to let you know."

A moment afterwards they were all on their way on the road leading to Slow Down Ranch.

"He didn't giggle much that time," said one of the ranchmen of Orlando, as they moved on.

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CHAPTER XI

LOUISE

THE Young Doctor had had a trying day. Certain of his cases had given him anxiety; his drives had been long and fatiguing; he had had little sleep for several nights; and he was what Patsy Kernaghan had called "brittle"; for when Patsy was in a vexed condition, he used to say, "I'm so brittle I'll break if you look at me." As the Young Doctor drew his chair up to the supper-table and looked at his food with a critical air, he was very brittle.

For one born in Enniskillen he had an even nature, but its evenness was more the result of mental control than temperament. He sighed as he looked at the marrow bones which, as a rule, gave him joy when their turn came in the weekly menu; he eyed askance the baked potatoes; and the salad waiting for his skilled hand only gave him an extra feeling of fatigue.

Most men in a like state say, "I don't know what's the matter with me," and yet many a one has been stimulated out of it, away from it, by the soft voice and friendly hand of a woman.

There was, however, no woman to distract the overworked Young Doctor by her freshness, drawn from the reservoir of her vitality; and that was a pity, because, as Patsy Kernaghan many a time said: "Aw, Doctor dear, what's the good of a tongue to a wagon if there's only wan horse to draw it! Shure, you'll think a lot

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more of yourself whin you're able to stand at the head of your own table and say grace for two at least, and thanksgiving for manny, if it's the will of God."

The Young Doctor did not know why he was so brittle, but the truth is he was feeding on himself, and that is a poor business. Every dog knows it is good to feed on the knuckle of a goat if he hasn't got a beef-bone, and every real man knows—though to know anything at all he must have been married—that any marriage is better than no marriage at all; because whether it's happy or unhappy, it makes you concerned for some one besides yourself, if you have any soul or sense at all.

The Young Doctor was under the delusion that he loved his lonely table and the making of a simple salad for a simple man, but then he came from Ireland and had imagination; and that is always a curse when it isn't a blessing, for there is nothing between the two. At the end of his troubled day he almost cursed the salad as it crinkled in the dish just slightly rubbed with garlic. He was turning away in apathy from it—from the bones with the marrow oozing out of the ends, from the bursting baked potatoes, from the beautiful crusts of brown bread, when he heard the door-bell ring. At the sound his face set as though it were mortar. He wanted no patients this night; but from the peremptory sound of the bell he was sure some one had come who needed medicine or the knife, and he could refuse neither; for was he not at everybody's beck and call, the Medicine Man whose door was everybody's door!

"Damnation!" he said aloud, and turned towards the door expectantly.

Then he bitted himself to wait; and he did not wait

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long. Presently he heard a voice say, "I must see him," and the door opened wide, and Louise Mazarine stepped into the room. Her face was pale and distraught; her blue eyes, with their long, melancholy lashes, stared at him in appealing apprehension. Her lips were almost white; her hands trembled out towards him.

"I've come—I've come!" she said. It had the finality of the last chapter of a book.

The Young Doctor closed the door, ignoring for the instant the hands held out to him. After all, he was a very sane Young Doctor, and he had the faculty of keeping his head, and his heart, and his own counsel. Also he knew there was an inquisitive old servant in the hallway.

When the door was closed, he turned round on Louise slowly, and then he held out his hands to her, for she was shrinking away, as though he had repulsed her. He pressed her trembling hands in the way that only faithful friendship shows, and said:

"Yes, I know you've come, but tell me what you've come for."

"I couldn't bear it any longer," she said brokenly. "I'm not made of steel or stone. It's been terrible. He doesn't speak to me except to order me to do this or that. I haven't done anything wrong, and I won't be treated so. I won't! When he made me kneel down by him in the trail and tried to make me pray to be forgiven of my sins, I couldn't stand it. I don't know what my sins are, and I won't be converted if I don't want to. I'm not a slave. I'm of age. I'm twenty."

There was no sign of fatigue now in the Young Doctor's face. Something had called him out of him-

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self, and this human need had done what a wife's hand might have done, or the welcome of a child.

"No, you're not twenty," he declared, with a friendly smile. "You aren't ten. You are only one. In fact, I think you're only just born!"

He did not speak as lightly as the words read. In his voice there was that compassionate irony with which men shield those for whom they care. It means protection and defence. Somehow she seemed to him like a small bird on its first flight from the nest, or, as Patsy Kernaghan would have said, "a tame lamb loose in a zoolyogical gardin."

"So because you won't pray and can't bear it any longer, you run away from him, and come to me!" the other remarked with a sorry smile, pouring out a glass of wine from a decanter that stood on the table.

"Drink this," he said presently, pushing her down gently into a chair with one hand and holding the glass to her lips. "Drink it every drop. As I said, you've only run away from one master to fall into another master's hands. You're a wicked girl. Drink it—every drop. . . . That's right."

He took the empty glass from her, put it on the table, and then stood and looked at her meditatively, fastening her eyes with his own. More than her eyes were fastened, however. Her mind was also under control: but that was because she believed in him so.

"Yes, you're a wicked girl," he said decisively.

She shuddered and shrank back. In her eyes was a helpless look, very different from that which she had given not so many days before when, with Orlando Guise behind her, she had defied her aged husband in his doorway, and her defiance had moved him from her path. Then she had been inspired by the fact

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that the man she loved was near her, that she had been wrongfully accused and was ready to fight. Afterwards, however, when she was alone, the sterile presence of Joel Mazarine, his merciless eyes, his hopeless religious tyranny, had worn upon her as his past violence had never done.

"Wicked!" Did this man, then, believe her guilty? Did he, of all men, think that the night upon the prairie alone with Orlando had been her undoing? Had not the brother of Rigby the chemist borne witness with his own eyes to her complete innocence? If the Young Doctor disbelieved, then indeed she was undone.

"You don't think that of me—of me!" she gasped, her lips all white again. She got to her feet excitedly. "You shall not believe it of me."

"No, I did not say I believed *that*," the other remarked almost casually. "But if I did believe it, I don't know that it would make much difference to me. Fate, or God Almighty, or whatever it was, had stacked the cards against you. When I said it was wicked, I meant you did wrong in rushing away from your husband and coming to me. I suppose you have definitely left your husband—eh? You've 'left' him, as they say?"

He had an incorrigible sense of humour, as well as an infinite common sense. He wanted to break this spell of tense emotion which possessed her. So he pursued a new course.

"Don't you think it's rather hard on me?" he continued. "I'm a lone man in this house, with only one old woman to protect me, and I'm unmarried. I've a reputation to lose, and there are lots of mothers and daughters hereabouts. Besides, a medical practice is

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hard to get and not easy to keep. What do you mean by making a refuge of me, when there's nothing for me in it, not even the satisfaction of going into the Divorce Court with you? You wicked Mrs. Mazarine!"

"Oh, don't speak like that!" Louise interjected. "Please don't. Don't scold me. I had to come. I was going mad."

The Young Doctor had the case well in hand. He had eased the terrible tension; he was slowly reducing her to the normal. It was the only thing to do.

"What did Mazarine do or say to you that made you run away? Come now, didn't you first make up your mind to go to Slow Down Ranch—to Orlando?"

She flushed. "Yes, but only for a minute. Then I thought of you, because I knew you could help me as no one else could. Everybody believes in you. But then Li Choo——"

"Oh, Li Choo! So Li Choo comes into this, eh? So he said fly to Orlando, eh? Well, that's what he would do. But why Li Choo—a Chinaman? Tell me, what does Li Choo know?"

Quickly she told him the story of the day when Joel Mazarine had almost surprised her in Orlando's room; how Li Choo had saved the situation by falling down the staircase with the priceless porcelain, and how Mazarine had kicked him—"manhandled" him, as they say in the West.

"Chinamen don't like being kicked, especially Chinamen of Li Choo's station," remarked the Young Doctor meditatively. "You don't know, of course, that Li Choo was a prince or a big bug of some sort in his own country. Why he left China I don't know, but I do chance to know that if another Chinky meets Li Choo carrying a basket on his shoulders, or a pack-

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age in his hand, he kow-tows, and takes it away from him, and carries it himself. . . . No, I don't know why Li Choo is here in Askatoon, or why he's such a slave to Mrs. Mazarine; but I do know that he's a different-looking man when a Chinky runs up against him than when he's choring at Tralee. A sick Chinaman told me only a week ago that Li Choo was 'once big high boss Chinaman in Pekin.' . . . And so the mandarin advised you to fly to Orlando, did he? I wonder if it's a way they have in China."

"But I wouldn't go. I've come to you—Patsy Kernaghan brought me," Louise urged.

"Yes, I see you've come to me," remarked the Young Doctor dryly, "and you've stayed about long enough for me to feel your pulse and diagnose your case. And now you're going back with Patsy Kernaghan to your own home."

She trembled; then she seemed to strengthen herself in defiance. What a change it was from the child of a few weeks ago—indeed, of a few moments ago! The same passionate determination which seized her when she faced Mazarine with Orlando, possessed her again. With her whole being palpitating, she said: "I will not go back. I will not go back. I will kill myself first."

"That would be a useless sacrifice of yourself and others," the Young Doctor answered quietly. Seeing that the new thing in her was not to be conquered in a moment, he quickly made up his mind what to do.

"See," he continued, "you needn't go back to Tralee to-night, but you're not going to stay here, dear child. I'll take you over to Nolan Doyle's ranch, to Mrs. Doyle. You'll spend the night there, and we'll think about to-morrow when to-morrow comes. You certainly can't stay here. I'm not going to have it.

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Bless you, you're neither so young nor so old as all that!"

Suddenly he grasped both her arms and looked her in the face. "My dear young lady," he said gently, "I'm not your only friend, but I'm a stout friend—so stout that there isn't a mount can carry us both together. When you ride, I walk; when I ride, you walk—you understand? We don't walk or ride together. I'm taking care of you. Your life is too good to be ruined by rashness. You're in a 'state,' as my old housekeeper would say, but you'll be all right presently. As soon as I've made a salad, and had a marrow-bone, you and I and Patsy Kernaghan are going to Nolan Doyle's ranch. . . . My dear, you must do what I say, and if you do, you'll be happy yet. I don't see how, quite, but it is so; and meanwhile, you mustn't make any mistakes. You must play the game. And now come and have some supper."

She waved her hand in protest. "I can't eat," she said. "Indeed, I can't."

"Well, you can drink," he answered. "You shall not leave this house alive unless you have a pint of milk with a little dash of what Patsy calls 'oh-be-joyful' in it."

He left the room for a moment, while she sat watching the door as a prisoner might watch for the return of a friendly jailer. He had a curious influence over her. It was wholly different from that of Orlando. Presently he returned.

"It's all right," he said. "Patsy and you and I will be at Nolan Doyle's ranch in another hour. I've sent word to Mrs. Doyle. I've ordered your milk-punch too, and now I think I'll make my salad. You never saw me make a salad," he added, smiling. "I've done

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some successful operations in my day; I've played about with bones and sinews, proud of my work sometimes, but the making of a perfect salad is the proud achievement of a master-mind." He laughed like a boy. "'Come hither, come hither, my little daughter, and do not tremble so,'" he said so cheerfully as to be almost jeering.

His cheerfulness was not in vain, for a smile stole to her lips, though it only flickered for an instant and was gone. For all that, he knew he had saved the situation, and that another chapter of the life-history of Orlando and Louise had been ended. A fresh chapter would begin to-morrow; but sufficient unto the day was the evil thereof.

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CHAPTER XII

MAN UNNATURAL

MAZARINE discovered the flight of Louise soon after she had gone. He had not been five hundred yards from the house since she returned with Orlando after the night spent upon the prairie, save when he had been obliged to go in to Askatoon and had taken her with him, dumb and passive. She had been a prisoner, tied to the stirrups of her captor; and he had berated her, had preached at her. As Louise had said, once on the way to Askatoon, he had even tried to make her kneel down in the dust of the trail and plead with Heaven to convict her of sin.

On the evening of Louise's flight, however, he had been forced to go to a neighbouring ranch, and had commanded Li Choo to keep a strict watch at the windows of her room to see that she did not attempt escape. She could not escape by the door of the room because he had the key in his pocket. Li Choo was not a stern jailer, however. Mazarine had not been gone three minutes before the Chinaman had touch with Louise. He did more; he threw up into the open window of her room a screw-driver, with which she took the old-fashioned door off its hinges, after half an hour's work. Then, leaving a note on the table of the dining-room, to say that she could not bear it any longer, that she would never come back, and that she meant to be free, she summoned Patsy Kernaghan and fled to the Young Doctor.

When Mazarine returned and found her note, he

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plunged up the stairs to her bedroom, his pious wrath gurgling in his throat, only to find the door locked; for Li Choo had promptly restored it to its hinges after Louise had gone, afterwards dropping from the high window like a cat, without hurt.

Li Choo, blinking, opaque, immobile, save for his piercing and mysterious eyes, had no explanation to give. All he said was, "Me no see all sides house same time"; so suggesting that, as the room had windows on all three sides, Louise must have escaped while he made his supposed sentry-go, slip-slopping round the house. Mazarine showed what he thought by spitting in Li Choo's face, and then rushing into the house to get the raw-hide whip with which he had punished the Chinaman before, and with which he had threatened his wife.

When he returned a moment afterwards, Li Choo was nowhere to be seen; but in his place were two other Chinamen who had, as it were, fallen from the skies, standing where Li Choo had stood, immobile, blinking and passive like Li Choo, their hands lost in the long sleeves of their coats, their pigtails so tightly braided as, in seeming, to draw their slanting eyelids still to greater incline, and to give a look of petrified intentness to their faces.

Something in their attitude gave Mazarine apprehension. It was as though Li Choo had been transformed by some hellish magic into two other Chinamen. The rage of his being seemed to stupefy him; he could not resist the sensation of the unnatural.

"What do you want? How did you come here?" he asked of the two in a husky voice.

"We want speak Li Choo. We come see Li Choo," answered one of the Chinamen impassively.

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"He was here a minute ago," answered Mazarine gruffly.

Then he turned away, going swiftly toward the kitchen, and calling to Li Choo. As he went, he was conscious of low, cackling laughter, but when he turned to look, the two Chinamen stood where he had left them, blinking and immobile.

The uncanny feeling possessing him increased; the thing was unnatural. He lurched on, however, looking for Li Choo. The Chinaman was not to be found in the kitchen, in the woodshed, in the cellar, in the loft, or in his own attic room; and the half-breed, Rada, declared she had not seen him. He could not be at the stables, for they were too far away to be reached in the time; and there were no signs of him between the house and the stables. When Mazarine returned to the front of the house, the two Chinamen also had vanished; there were no signs of them anywhere. Search did not discover them.

Mingled anger and fear now possessed Mazarine. He would search no longer. No doubt the other two Chinamen had joined Li Choo in his hiding-place, wherever it was. Why had the Chinamen come? What were they after? It did not matter for the moment. What he wanted was Louise, his bad child-wife, who had broken from her cage and flown from him. Where would she go? Where, but to Slow Down Ranch? Where, but to her lover, the circus-rider, the boy with the head of brown curls, with the ring on his finger and the Cupid mouth! Where would she go but to the man with whom she had spent the night on the prairie!

Now he believed altogether that she was guilty, that everybody had conspired to deceive him, that he was in

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a net of dark deception. Even the two Chinamen, mysteriously coming and going, had laughed at him like two heathen gods, and had vanished suddenly like heathen gods.

A weakness came over him, and the skin of his face became creased and clammy like that of a drowned man; his limbs trembled, so desperate was his passion. He stumbled into the house and into the dining-room, where he kept a little black-bound Bible once belonging to his great-grandfather. He had thumbed it well in past years, searching it for passages of violence and denunciation. Now holy superstition seized him in the midst of the work of the devil, surrounding him with an almost medieval instinct. He seized the ancient book, as it were to deliver its incantations against everyone destroying his peace, stealing from him that which he prized beyond all earthly things.

Take this woman away from him, this child-wife from his sixty-five years, and what was left for him? She was the garden of spring in which his old age roamed at ease luxuriously. She was the fruit of the tree of pleasure. She was that which made him young again, renewed in him youth and the joys of youth. Take her away, the flower that smelled so sweet and luscious, the thing that he had held so often to his lips and to his breast? Take away what was his, by every holy right, because it was all according to the law of the land and of the Holy Gospel, and what was left? Only old age, the empty house bereft of a fair young mistress, something to smile at and to curse, if need be, since it was his own by the laws of God and man.

Take her away, and the two wives that he had buried long years ago, with their gray heads and lank,

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sour faces, from which the light of youth had fled with the first child come to them—their ghosts would seek him out. They would sit at his table, and taunt him with his vanished Louise, asking him if he thought she was anything more than one of the trolls that tempted men aforetime; one of the devil's wenches that lured him into the secret garden, only at last to leave him scorned and alone.

Where had she gone, his troll, with the face of an angel? Where had she gone? Where would she go, except to her devil's lover at Slow Down Ranch!

He had just started for Slow Down Ranch armed with his greasy, well-thumbed Bible like a weapon in his pocket, when he heard a voice call him. It was full of the devil's laughter. It was the voice of Burlingame, the lawyer, on his horse. Burlingame had had a weary day and was refreshing himself by a canter on the prairie.

"Where are you going?" asked Burlingame, as he cantered up to Mazarine's wagon. "To Slow Down Ranch?"

He saw the look of the drowned man in the face of Mazarine, over whom the flood of disaster had passed, and he guessed at once the cause of it; for Burlingame had the philosophy of a Satanic mind, and he knew the things that happen to human nature.

"So, she's gone again, has she?" he added deliberately, with intent to put a knife into the old man's feelings and to turn it in the thick of them. He wanted to hurt, because Mazarine had only a short time before dispensed with his services as a lawyer, and had blocked the way to that intimacy which he had hoped to establish with Tralee and its mistress. Besides, his pride as a professional man had been hurt, and he

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had been deprived of income which now went to his most hated professional rival. Mazarine's jealous soul had cut him off, on coming to know Burlingame's dark reputation. He had not liked the look Burlingame had given Louise when they met.

"Gone again, has she?" Burlingame repeated sarcastically. "Well, you needn't go to Slow Down Ranch to find her. She isn't there, and you won't find him there either, for I saw him come by the Lark River Trail into Askatoon as I left, and a lady was with him. He booked this morning for the sleeper of the express going East to-night; so, if I were you, I'd turn my horse's nose to Askatoon, Mr. Mazarine. I don't know why I tell you this, as you're not my client now, but I go about the world doing good, Mr. Mazarine—only doing good."

There was a look in Burlingame's face which Heaven would not have accepted as goodness, and there was that in his voice which did not belong to the Courts of the Lord. Malice, though veiled, showed in face and sounded in voice. Even as he spoke, Joel Mazarine turned his horse's head towards Askatoon.

"You're sure a woman was with him? You're sure she was with him?" he asked in chaos of passion.

"I couldn't see her face; it was too far away," answered Burlingame suggestively, "but you can form your own conclusions—and the express is due in thirty minutes!"

He looked at his watch complacently. "What's the good, Mazarine? Why don't you say, 'Go and sin no more?' Or why don't you divorce her with the evidence about that night on the prairie? I could have got you a verdict and damages. Yes, I could have got you plenty of damages. He's rich. You took her

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back and condoned; you condoned, Mazarine, and now you'll neither have damages nor wife—and the express goes in thirty minutes!"

"The express won't take Mrs. Mazarine away to-night," the old man said, a look of jungle fierceness filling his face.

Burlingame laughed unpleasantly. "Yes, you'll foul your own nest, Mazarine, and then bring her back to live in it. I know you. It isn't the love of God in your heart, because you'll never forgive her; but you'll bring her back to the nest you fouled, just because you want her—'You damned and luxurious mountain goat,' as Shakespeare called your kind."

With another laugh, which somewhat resembled that of the two strange vanished Chinamen, Burlingame flicked his horse and cantered away. A little time afterwards, however, he turned and looked toward Askatoon, and he saw the old man whipping his horse into a gallop to reach Askatoon railway station before the express went East.

"It's true, Mazarine," he said aloud. "Orlando booked for the sleeper going East in thirty minutes; but the sleeper was for one only, and that one was his mother, you old hippopotamus. . . . But I wonder where she is—where the divine Louise is? She hasn't levanted with her Orlando. . . . Now, I wonder!" he added.

Then, with a sudden impulse, he dug heels into his horse's sides, and galloped back towards Askatoon. He wanted to see what would happen before the express went East.

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CHAPTER XIII

ORLANDO GIVES A WARNING

ASKATOON had never lost its interest for Mazarine and his wife since the day the Mayor had welcomed them at the railway station. Askatoon was not a petty town. Its career had been chequered and interesting, and it had given haven to a large number of uncommon people. Unusual happenings had been its portion ever since it had been the rail-head of the Great Transcontinental Line, and many enterprising men, instead of moving on with the railway, when it ceased to be the rail-head, settled there and gave the place its character. The town had never been lawless, although some lawless people had sojourned there.

It was too busy a place to be fussing about little things, or tearing people's characters to pieces, or gossiping even to the usual degree; yet in its history it had never gossiped so much as it had done since the Mazarines had come.

From the first the vast majority of folk had sided with Louise and denounced Mazarine. They knew well she had married too young to be self-seeking or intriguing; and, in any case, no woman in Askatoon or yet in the West, could have conceived of a girl marrying "the ancient one from the jungle," as Burlingame had called him.

Burlingame could never have been on the side of the Ten Commandments himself, even with a sure and certain hope of happiness on earth, and in Heaven

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also, guaranteed to him. Nothing could have condemned Mazarine so utterly as the coalition between the "holy good people," as Burlingame called them, and himself; and between the holy good people and himself were many who in their secret hearts would never have shunned Louise if, after the night on the prairie with Orlando, release had been found for her in the Divorce Court. Jonas Billings had put the matter in a nutshell when he said:

"It ain't natural, them two, at Tralee. For marrying her he ought to be tarred and feathered, and for the way he treats her he ought to be let loose in the ha'nts of the grizzlies. What he done to that girl is a crime ag'in' the law. If there was any real spunk in the Methodists, they'd spit him out like pus."

That was exactly what the Methodist body had decided to do on the very day that Louise had fled from Tralee and the old man pursued her in the wrong direction. The Methodist body had determined to discipline Mazarine, to eject him from their communion, because he had raised a whip against his wife; because he had maltreated Li Choo; and because he had used language unbecoming a Christian. They had decided that Mazarine had not shown the righteous anger of a Christian man, but of one who had backslided, and who, in the words of Rigby the chemist, "Must be spewed out of the mouth of the righteous into the dust of shame."

That was the situation when Joel Mazarine drove furiously into the town and made for the railway station. Men like Jonas Billings, who saw him, and had the scent for sensation, passed the word on downtown, as it is called, that something "was up" with Mazarine, and the railway station was the place where

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what was up could be seen. Therefore, a quarter of an hour before the arrival of the express which was to carry Orlando Guise's mother to her sick sister three hundred miles down the line, a goodly number of citizens had gathered at the station—far more than usually watched the entrance or exit of the express.

Mazarine's wagon and steaming horses were tied up outside the station, and inside on the platform Moses-not-much, as Mazarine had been called by Jonas Billings, marched up and down, his snaky little eyes blinking at the doorway of the station reception-room. People came and some of them nodded to him derisively. Some, with more hardihood, asked him if he was going East; if he was expecting anyone; if he was seeing somebody off.

A good many asked him the last question, because, as the minutes had passed, Burlingame had arrived. He had also disclosed his great joke to those who would carry it far and near, together with the news that Louise had taken flight. The last fact, however, was known to several people, because more than one had seen the Young Doctor and Patsy Kernaghan taking Louise to Nolan Doyle's ranch.

It was dusk. The lamps of the station were being lighted five minutes before the express arrived, and as the lights flared up, Orlando entered the waiting-room of the station, with a lady on his arm, and presently showed at the platform doorway, smiling and cheerful. He did not blench when Mazarine came towards him. Mazarine had seen the flutter of a blue skirt in the waiting-room, and his wife had worn blue that day!

Orlando saw the heavy, offensive figure of Mazarine making for him. He, however, appeared to take no

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notice, though he watched his outrageous pursuer out of the corner of his eye, as he quietly gave orders to a porter concerning a little heap of luggage. When he had finished this, he turned, as it were casually, to Mazarine. Then he giggled in the face of the Master of Tralee. It was like the matador's waving of the scarlet cloth in the face of the enraged bull. Having thus relieved his feelings, Orlando turned and walked to the door of the reception-room, but was stopped by the old man rushing at him. Swinging round, Orlando almost filled the doorway.

"You devil's spawn," Mazarine almost shouted, "get out of that doorway. I want my wife. You needn't try to hide her. You thief! You lecherous circus rider! Stand aside—leper!"

Orlando coolly stretched out his elbows till they touched the sides of the door, and as the crowd pressed, he said to them mockingly:

"Get back, boys. Give him air. Can't you see he's gasping for breath." Then he giggled again.

The old man looked round at the crowd, but he saw no sympathy—only aversion and ridicule. Suddenly he snatched his little black-bound Bible from his pocket, and held it up.

"What does this Book say?" he thundered. "It says that a wife shall cleave unto her husband until death. For the seducer and the betrayer death is the portion."

The whistle of the incoming train was heard in the distance.

The old man was desperate. It was clear he meant to assault Orlando. "You will only take her away over my dead body," he ground out in his passion. "The Lord gave, and only the Lord shall take away." He gathered himself together for the attack.

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Orlando waved a hand at him as one would at a troublesome child. At that instant, his mother stepped up behind him in the reception-room.

"Orlando," she said in her mincing, piping little voice, "Orlando, dear, the train is coming. Let me out. I'm not afraid of that bad man. I want to catch my train."

Orlando stepped aside, and his mother passed through, to the consternation of Mazarine, who fell back. The old man now realized that Burlingame had tricked him. Laughter went up from the crowd. They had had a great show at no cost.

"'If at first you don't succeed, try, try again,' Mr. Mazarine!" called someone from the crowd.

"It's the next train she's going by, old Moses-not-much," shouted a friend of Jonas Billings.

"She's had enough of you, Joel!" sneered another mocker.

"Wouldn't you like to know where she is, yellow-lugs?" queried a fat washerwoman.

For an instant Mazarine stood demused, and then, thrusting the Bible into his pocket, he drew himself up in an effort of pride and defiance.

"Judases! Jezebels!" he burst out at them all.

Then he lunged through the doorway of the reception-room; but at the door opening on the street his courage gave way, and hunched up like one in pain, he ran towards the hitching-post where he had left his horses and wagon. They were not there. With a groan which was also a malediction, he went up the street like a wounded elephant, and made his way to the police-station through a town which had no pity for him.

During the hour he remained in the town, Mazarine

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searched in vain for his horses and wagon. He looked everywhere except the shed behind the Methodist Church. It was there the two wags who had played the trick on him had carefully hitched the horses, and presently they announced in town that they did it because they knew Mazarine would want to go to the prayer-meeting to lay his crimes before the Mercy Seat!

It was quite true that it was prayer-meeting night, and as the merciless wags left the shed, the voice of brother Rigby the chemist was narrating for the hundredth time the story of his conversion, when, as he said, "the pains of hell gat hold of him." Brother Rigby loved to relate the tortures of the day when he was convicted of sin; but on this night his ancient story seemed appropriate, as he had dealt with great severity on the doings of the backslider, Joel Mazarine.

When the two wags returned to the front street of Askatoon, they were just in time to see the second meeting of Orlando and Mazarine. Mazarine had not been able to find his horses at any hotel or livery-stable, or in any street. It was at the moment, when, in his distraction, he had decided to walk back to Tralee, that Orlando, driving up the street, saw him. Orlando reined in his horses. dropped from his buggy and approached him.

There was a look in Orlando's eyes which was a reflection from a remote past, from ancestors who had settled their troubles with the first weapon and the best opportunity to their hands. "The furrin element in him," as Jonas Billings called it, had been at full flood ever since he had bade his mother good-bye. A storm of anger had been raised in him. As he said to himself, he had had enough; he had been filled up

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to the chin by the Mazarine business; and his impulsive youth wanted to end it by some smashing act which would be sensational and decisive. So it was that Fate offered the opportunity, as he came up the front street of Askatoon, and found himself face to face with Mazarine, over against the offices of Burlingame.

"A word with you, Mr. Mazarine," he said, with the air of a man who wants to ease his mind of its trouble by action. "Back there at the station, I kept my tongue and let you down easy enough, because my mother was present. She is old and sensitive, and she doesn't like to see her son doing the dirty work every man must do some time or other, when there's street-cleaning to be done. Now, let me tell you this: you've slandered as good a girl, you've libelled as straight a wife, as the best man in the world ever had. You've made a public scandal of your private home. You've treated the pure thing as if it were the foul thing; and yet, you want to keep the pure thing that you treat like a foul thing, under your rawhide whip, because it's young and beautiful and good. You don't want to save her soul"—he pointed to the Bible, which the old man had snatched from his pocket again—"you don't want to save her soul. You don't care whether she's happy in this world or the next; what you want is what you can see of her, for your life in this world only. You want——"

The old man interrupted him with a savage emotion which Jonas Billings said made him look like "a satyre."

"I want to save her from the wrath to come," he said. "This here holy Book gives me my rights. It says, 'Thou shalt not steal,' and the trouble I have

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comes from you that's stole my wife, that's put her soul in jeopardy, robbed my home——"

"Robbed your home!" interjected Orlando quietly, but with a voice of suppressed passion. "Robbed your home! Why, the other day you tried to prevent her entering it. You wanted to shut her out. After she had lived with you all those years, you believed she lied to you when she told you the truth about that night on the prairie; but her innocence was proved by one who was there all the time, and for shame's sake you had to let her in. But she couldn't stand it. I don't wonder. A lark wouldn't be at home where a vulture roosted."

"And so the lark flies away to the cuckoo," snarled the old man, with flecks of froth gathering at the corners of his mouth; for the sight of this handsome, long-limbed youth enraged him.

"Give her back to me. You know where she is," he persisted. "You've got her hid away. That's why you've sent your mother East—so's she wouldn't know, though from what I see, I shouldn't think it'd have made much difference to her."

Exclamations broke from the crowd. It was the wild West. It was a country where, not twenty years before, men did justice upon men without the assistance of the law; and the West understood that the dark insult just uttered would in days not far gone have meant death. The onlookers exclaimed, and then became silent, because a subtle sense of tragedy suddenly smothered their voices. Upon the silence there broke a little giggling laugh. It came from lips that were one in paleness with a face grown stony.

"I ought to kill you," Orlando said quietly after a moment, yet scarcely above a whisper. "I ought to

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kill you, Mazarine, but that would only be playing your game, for the law would get hold of me, and the girl that has left you would be sorrowful, for she knows I love her, though I never told her so. She'd be sorry to see the law get at me. She's going to be mine some day, in the right way. I'm not going behind your back to say it; I'm announcing it to all and sundry. I never did a thing to her that couldn't have been seen by all the world, and I never said a thing to her that couldn't be heard by all the world; but I hope she'll never go back to you. You've made a sewer for her to live in, not a home. As I said, I ought to kill you, but that would play your game, so I won't, not now. But I tell you this, Mazarine: if I ever meet you again—and I'm sure to do so—and you don't get off the road I'm travelling on, or the side-walk I'm walking on, when I meet you or when I pass you, I'll let you have what'll send you to hell, before you can wink twice.

"As for Louise—as for her: I don't know where she is, but I'll find her. One thing is sure: if I see her, I'll tell her never to go back to you; and she won't. You've drunk at the waters of Canaan for the last time. For a Christian you're pretty filthy. Go and wash in the pool of Siloam and be clean—damn you, Mazarine!"

With that he turned, almost unheeding the hands thrust out to grip his, the voices murmuring approval. In a moment he had swung his horses round. He did not go beyond ten yards, however, before someone, running beside his wagon, whispered up to him: "She's out at Nolan Doyle's ranch. She went with the Young Doctor and Patsy Kernaghan."

Behind, in the street, a young boy came running through the crowd and shouting: "I know where they

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are! I know where they are!" He stopped before Mazarine. "Gimme half a dollar, and I'll tell you where your horses are. Gimme half a dollar. Gimme half a dollar, and I'll tell you."

An instant later, with the half-dollar in his hand, he said: "They're up to the shed of the Meetin' House."

"Yes, go along up to the Meetin' House, Mr. Mazarine," said one of the miscreants who had driven the horses there. "They're holding a post-mortem on you at the prayer meetin'. They say you're dead in trespasses and sins. Get along, Joel."

The crowd started to follow him to the shed where his horses were, but after a moment he turned on them and said:

"Ain't you heerd and seen enough? Ain't there no law to protect a man?"

A hoe was leaning against a fence. He saw it, and with sudden fury, seizing it, swung it round his head as if to throw it into the crowd. At that moment a stalwart constable ran forward, raised a hand towards Mazarine, and then addressed the crowd.

"We've had enough of this," he said. "I'll lock up any man that goes a step further towards the Meetin' House. Where do you think you are? This is Askatoon, the place of peace and happiness, and we're going to be happy, if I have to lock up the hull lot of you. I guess you can go right on, Mr. Mazarine," he added. "Go right on and git your wagon."

A moment later Mazarine was walking alone towards the Meeting House; but no, not alone, for a hundred devils were with him.

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CHAPTER XIV

FILION AND FIONA—ALSO PATSY KERNAGHAN

PATSY KERNAGHAN was in his element in the garden with which Norah Doyle had decorated the brown bosom of the prairie. It had verdant shrubs, green turf, thick fringes of flowers, and one solitary elm-tree in the centre whose branches spread like a cedar of Lebanon. In the moonlight Patsy had the telling of a wonderful story to such an audience as he had never had before in his life, and he had had them from Bundoran to Limerick, from Limerick to the foothills of the Rockies.

The séance of love and legend had been Patsy's own idea. At the supper-table spread by Norah Doyle, in spite of the protests of her visitors—the Young Doctor, Louise and Patsy—Nolan Doyle, who had a fine gift for playful talk, had tried to keep the situation free from melodrama. Yet Patsy had observed that, in spite of all efforts, Louise's eyes now and then filled with tears. Also, he saw that her senses seemed alert for something outside their little circle. It was as though she expected someone to arrive. She was in that state which is not normal and yet not abnormal —a kind of trance in which she did ordinary things in a natural way, yet mechanically, without full consciousness.

There was no one at the table who did not realize what, and for whom, she was waiting. To her primi-

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tive spirit, now that she was in trouble because of him, it seemed inevitable that Orlando should come. One thing was fixed in her mind: she would never return to Tralee or to the man whose odious presence made her feel as though she was in a cage with an animal.

Jonas Billings had called him "The ancient one from the jungle,' and that was how at last he appeared to her. His arms and breast were thick with hair; the hair on his face grew almost up to the eyes; the fingers of his splayed hands were blunt and broad; and his hair was like a nest for things of the jungle undergrowth.

Since she had been awakened, the memory of his hot breath in her face, of his clumsy fevered embraces was a torment to her; for always in contrast there were the fresh clean-shaven cheeks and chin of a young Berserker with honest, wondering blue eyes, the curly head of a child, and body and limbs like a young lean stag.

Orlando's touch was never either clammy or fevered. She could recall every time that he had touched her: when her fingers and his met on the afternoon that Li Choo had thrown himself down the staircase with the priceless porcelain; also the evening of the night spent on the prairie when, after the accident, her hand had been linked into his arm; also when he had clasped her fingers at their meeting in the morning. On each occasion she had felt a thrill like that of music—persuasive, living vibrations passing to remote recesses of her being.

No nearer had she ever come to the man she loved, no nearer had he sought to come. Once, the evening after the night spent on the prairie, when old Joel Mazarine had tried to make her pray and ask God's

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forgiveness, and he had kissed her with the lips of hungry old age, she had suddenly sat up in bed, her heart beating hard, every nerve palpitating, because in imagination she had seen herself in Orlando's arms, with his lips pressed to hers.

Poor neophyte in life's mysteries, having served as a slave at false altars of which she did not even know the ritual, it was no wonder that, after all she had suffered, she could not now bring herself into tune with the commonplace intercourse of life. Not that her friends utterly failed to lure her into it. She might well have been the victim of hysterics, but she was only distrait, pensive and gently smiling, with the smile of a good heart. Smiling with her had ever taken the place of conversation. It was an apology for not speaking when she could not speak what she felt.

Once during the meal she seemed to start slightly, as though she heard a familiar sound, and for some minutes afterwards she seemed to be listening, as it were, for a knock at the door, which did not come. Immediately after that, Patsy, happy in sitting down to table with "the quality"—for such they were to him—because he saw that Louise must be distracted, and because he had seen story-telling, many a time, draw people away from their troubles even more than music, said:

"Did you remember the day it is, anny of you? Shure, it's St. Droid's Day! Aw, then, don't you know who he was? You don't! Well, well, there's no tellin' how ignorant the wurruld can be. St. Droid—aw, he was a good man that brought the two children of Chief Diarmid and Queen Moira together. You didn't know about them two? You niver h'ard of Chief Diarmid and Queen Moira and their two lovely

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children? Well, there it is, there's no sayin' how ignorant y'are if y'are not Irish. Aw no, they wasn't man and wife. Diarmid was a widower and Moira was a widow. Diarmid's boy was Filion and Moira's girl was Fiona, an' the troubles of the two'd make a book for ivry day of the week, an' two for Sunday. An' the way that St. Droid brought them two together——Aw, come outside in the gardin where the moon's to the full, an' it's warm enough for anny man or woman that's got a warm heart, an' I'll tell you the story of Filion and Fiona. You'll not be forgettin' the names of them now, will ye? And while I'm tellin' you, all the time you'll be thinkin' of St. Droid, for it's his day. It was nothin' till him, St. Droid, that he lived in a cave, you understan'? Wasn't his face like the sun comin' up over the lake at Ballinhoe in the month of June! Well, it doesn't matter if you've niver seen Ballinhoe—you understan' what I mean. Well, then come out intil the gardin, darlins. Shure, I'm achin' to tell you the story—as fine a love-story as iver was told to man and woman."

So it was that Louise with eyes alight—for Patsy had a voice that could stir imagination in the dullest—so it was that Louise and the others went out into the moonlit garden, the prairie around them like an endless waste of sea. There they placed themselves in a half circle around Patsy, who sat upon a little bench, with his back to the big spreading elm-tree, which by some special gift had grown alone over the myriad years, defying storm and winter's frost, until it seemed to have an honoured permanence, as stable as the prairie earth itself.

As they seated themselves, there was renewed in Louise the feeling she had at supper-time, when she had

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imagined—or had her senses accurately divined?—that Orlando was near, so sure had been the sensation that she had expected Orlando to enter the room where they sat. Now it was on her again, and somehow she felt him there with her. He was Filion and she was Fiona.

Since the day she had first seen Orlando, she had awakened to life's realities. There had grown in her an alertness and a delicate sense of things, which, though natural to one born with a soul that cared little for sordid things, was not common, except in Celtic circles where the unseen thing is more real than the seen; where gold and precious stones are only valued in so far as they can purchase freedom, dreams and desire.

Louise had not been thrilled without cause. Orlando, the real material Orlando, had driven out to Nolan Doyle's ranch, but having come, could not at first bring himself to enter. Something in him kept saying that it was not fair to her; kept admonishing him to let things take their course; that now was not the time to see her; that it might place her in a false position. Blameless though she was, she might be blamed by the world, if he and she, on the night that she fled from Joel Mazarine should meet, and, above all, meet alone—and what was the good of meeting at all, if they did not meet alone! What could two voiceless people say to each other, people who only spoke with their hearts and souls, when others were staring at them, watching every act, listening for every word. His better sense kept telling him to go back to Slow Down Ranch.

But there she was inside Nolan Doyle's house, and he had come deliberately to see her.

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He stood outside in the garden near the great spreading elm-tree, torn by a sense of duty and a sense of desire; but the desire was to let her see by his presence that he would be a tower of strength to her, no matter what happened. It was not the desire which had possessed him whom Patsy Kernaghan had called the keeper of the "zoolyogical" garden.

He had just made up his mind that courage was the right thing: that he must see her in the presence of others for one minute, whatever the issue, when she came out with Patsy Kernaghan, the Young Doctor, and Norah and Nolan Doyle. None saw him, and, as they seated themselves, he stepped noiselessly under the spreading branches of the elm-tree. He would not speak to them yet; he would wait. In the shade made by the drooping branches he could not be seen, yet he could hear and see all.

There was silence for a moment, and then Patsy began the tale of St. Droid—"whoever he was," as Patsy said to himself; for he was going to make up out of his head this story of St. Droid and St. Droid's Day, and Queen Moira, Filion and Fiona. It was a bold idea, but it gave Patsy the opportunity of his life.

His description of Black Brian, the rich, ruthless King, to whom Queen Moira gave her daughter Fiona, despite the girl's bitter sorrow, was a masterpiece. It was modelled on Joel Mazarine. It was the behemoth transferred to Ireland, to the *cromlechs* and castles, to the causeways, the caves, and the stony hillsides; to the bogs and the quicksands and the Little Men; but it could not be recognized as a portrait, though everyone felt how wonderful it was that a legend of a thousand years should be so close to the life of Askatoon.

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Patsy had no knowledge of what the mother of Louise was like, but the likeness between her cruel, material, selfish spirit and Queen Moira, in the sacrifice of their offspring, provoked the admiration of the Young Doctor, whose philosophical mind had soon discovered that Patsy was making up the tale.

That did not matter. Having got the thing started, Patsy gave reins to his imagination; and storm, terror, danger, and the capture of Fiona by Filion, from Black Brian's castle in the hills, was told with primitive force and passion. But the most wonderful part of the story described how a strange dwarfed Little Man came out of the hills in the East, across the land, to the Western fastness of Black Brian, and there slew that evil man, because of an ancient feud—slew him in a situation of great indignity, and left him lying on the sands for the tide to wash him out to the deep and hungry sea. Even here Patsy had his inspiration from real life; and yet he disguised it all so well that no one except the Young Doctor even imagined what he meant.

Under the tree Orlando listened with strained attention, absorbed and, at times, almost overcome. His long sigh of relief was joined to the sighs of the others when Patsy finished. The Young Doctor rose to go, and the others rose also.

"That's a wonderful story, Patsy," said the Young Doctor to him; and he added quizzically: "You tell it so well because you've told it so often before, I suppose?"

"Aw, well, that's it, I expect," answered the Irishman coolly.

"I thought so," responded the Young Doctor. "Now, how many times do you think you've told that story before, Patsy?"

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"About a hundred, I should think; or no—I should think about two hundred times," answered Patsy shamelessly.

"I thought so," said the Young Doctor, but before turning to go into the house, he leaned and whispered in his ear: "Patsy, you're the most beautiful liar that ever come out of Ireland."

"Aw, Doctor dear!" said Patsy softly.

They all moved towards the house, save Louise.

"Please, I want to stay behind a minute or two," she said, as she held out a hand to the Young Doctor. "Don't wait for me. I want to be alone a little while."

Once more the Young Doctor felt the trembling appeal of her palm as on the first day they met, and he gripped her hand warmly.

"It will all come right. Good-night, my dear," he said cheerfully. "Have a good sleep on it."

Louise remained in the garden alone, the moon shining on her face lifted to the sky. For a moment she stood so, wrapped in the peace of the night, but her body was almost panting from the thrill of the legend which Patsy Kernaghan had told. As he had meant it to do, it gave her hope; although before her eyes was the picture that Patsy had drawn of Black Brian with his great sword beside him lying on the sands, waiting for the hungry sea to claim him.

Presently there stole through the warm air of the night the sound of her own name. She did not start. It seemed to her part of the dream in which she was. Her hand went to her heart, however.

Again in Orlando's voice came the word "*Louise*," a little louder now. She turned towards the tree, and there beside it stood Orlando.

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For an instant there was a sense of unreality, of ghostliness, and then she gave a little cry of pain and joy. As she ran towards him, with sudden impulse, his arms spread out and he caught her to his breast.

His lips swept her hair. "Louise! Louise!" he whispered passionately. For an instant they stood so, and then he gently pressed her away from him.

"I had to come," he said. "I want you to know that whatever happens, you may depend on me. When you call, I will come. I must go now. For your sake I must not stay. I had to see you, I had to tell you what I had never told you."

"You've always told me," she murmured.

He stretched out his hand to clasp hers. He did not dare to open his arms again. The lips which he had never kissed were very near, and ah, so sweet! She must not come to him now.

One swift clasp of the hand, and then he vaulted over the fence and was gone. A few moments afterwards she heard the rumble of his wagon on the prairie —he had tied up his horses some distance from the house.

As the Young Doctor drove homeward with Patsy Kernaghan, he also heard the rumble of the wagon not far in front of him. Then he began to wonder why Louise had waited behind in the garden. He put the thought away from him, however. There was no deceit in Louise; he was sure of that.

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CHAPTER XV

OUTWARD BOUND

JOEL MAZARINE did not take the trail to Tralee immediately after he found his wagon and horses in the shed of the Methodist Meeting House. As he drove through the main street of Askatoon again, his lawyer —Burlingame's rival—waved a hand towards him in greeting. An idea suddenly possessed the old man, and he stopped the horses and beckoned.

"Get in and come to your office with me," he said to the lawyer. "There's some business to do right off."

The unpopularity of a client in no way affects a lawyer. Indeed, the most notorious criminal is the greatest legal advertisement, and the fortunate part of the business is that no lawyer is ever identified with the morals, crimes or virtues of his client, yet has particular advantage from his crimes. So it was that Mazarine's lawyer enjoyed the public attention given to his drive through the town with Mazarine. He could hear this man say, "Hello, what's up!" or another remark that the Law and the Gospel were out for war.

Just as they were about to enter the office, however, Jonas Billings, who had a faculty for being everywhere at the interesting moment, said, so as to be heard by Mazarine and his lawyer, and all others standing near:

"Goin' to leave his property away from his wife! Makin' a new will—eh? That's it, stamp on a girl when she's down! When you can't win the woman,

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keep the cash. Woe is me, Willy, but the wild one rageth!"

Jonas' drawling, nasal, high-pitched sarcasm reached Mazarine's ears and stung him. He lurched round, and with beady eyes blinking with malice, said roughly: "The fool is known by his folly."

"You don't need to label yourself, Mr. Mazarine," retorted Jonas with a grin.

The crowd laughed in approval. The loose lower lip of the Master of Tralee quivered. The leviathan was being tortured by the little sharks.

Presently the door of the lawyer's office slammed on the street, and Mazarine proceeded to make a new will, which should leave everything away from Louise. After he had slowly dictated the terms of the will, with a glutinous solemnity he said:

"There; that's what comes of breaking the laws of God and man. That's what a woman loses who doesn't do her duty by the man that can give her everything, and that's give her everything, while she plays the Jezebel."

"I'll complete this for you, and you can sign it now," remarked the lawyer evasively, not without shrinking; "but it won't stand as it is, or as you want it to stand, because Mrs. Mazarine has her legal claims in spite of it! She's got a wife's dower-rights according to the law. That's one-third of your property. It's the law of the land, and you can't sign it away from her, Mr. Mazarine."

The old man's face darkened still more; his crooked fingers twisted in his beard.

"I see you forgot that," added the lawyer. "There's only one way to dispossess her, and that's to put her through Divorce—if you think you can. Of course

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this document'll stand as far as it goes, and it's perfectly legal, but it isn't what you intend, and she'd get her one-third in spite of it."

"I'll come back to-morrow," said the old man, rising to his feet. "You make it out, and I'll come back and sign it to-morrow. I'll make a sure thing of so much, anyway. The divorce'll settle the rest. You have it ready at noon to-morrow, and you can start divorce proceedings to-morrow too. There's plenty of evidence. She run away from me to go to him. She stayed with him a whole night on the prairie. I want the divorce, and I can get the evidence. Everybody knows. This is the Lord's business, and I mean to see it through. Shame has come to the house of a servant of the Lord, and there must be purging. In the days of David she would have been stoned to death, and not so far back as that, either."

A moment afterwards he was gone, slamming the door behind him. His blood was up—a turgid, angry flood almost bursting his veins. He now made his way to the house of the Methodist minister. There he announced that if he was disciplined at Quarterly Meeting, as was talked about in the streets, he would go to law against every class-leader for defamation of character.

By the time this was done the evening was well advanced. He did not leave Askatoon until the moment which coincided with that in which Orlando left Nolan Doyle's garden and took the trail to Slow Down Ranch. Orlando would strike the trail from Askatoon to Tralee at a point where another trail also joined.

Mazarine drove fast through the town, as though eager to put it behind him, but when he reached the trail on the prairie he slackened his pace, and drove

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steadily homewards, lost in the darkest reflections he had ever known; and that was saying much. The reins lay loose in his fingers, and he became so absorbed that he was conscious of nothing save movement.

The heart of Black Brian, the King, of whom Patsy Kernaghan told his mythical story in Nolan Doyle's garden, had never housed more repulsive thoughts than were in Mazarine's heart in this unfortunate hour of his own making. No single feeling of kindness was in his spirit. He heard nothing, was conscious of nothing, save his own grim, fantastic imaginings.

A jealousy and hatred as terrible as ever possessed a man were on him. An egregious self-will, a dreadful spirit of unholy old age in him, was turned hatefully upon the youth long since gone from himself—the youth which, in its wild, innocent ardours, had brought two young people together, one of them his own captive for years.

The peace of the prairie, the shining, infant moon, the kindly darkness, were all at variance with the soul of the man, whose only possession was what money could buy; and what money had bought in the way of human flesh and blood, beauty and sweet youth he had not been able to hold. To his mind, what was the good of having riches and power, if you could not also have love, licence and the loot of the conqueror!

He had wrestled with the Lord in prayer; he had been a class-leader and a lay-preacher; he had exhorted and denounced; he had pleaded and proscribed; yet never in all his days of professed religion had a heart for others really moved Joel Mazarine.

He had given now and then of gold and silver, because of the glow of mind which the upraised hands of

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admiration brought him, mistaking it for the real thing; but his life had been barren because it had not emptied itself for others, at any time, or anywhere.

He had been a professed Christian, not because of Olivet, but because of Sinai. It was the stormy authority of the sword of the Lord of Gideon of the Old Testament which had drawn him into the fold of religion. It was some strain of heredity, his upbringing, the life into which he was born, pious, pedantic and preposterously prayerful, which had made him a professional Christian, as he was a professional farmer, rancher and money-maker. For such a man there never could be peace.

In his own world of wanton inhumanity, oblivious of all except his torturing thoughts, he did not know that, as he neared the Cross Trails on his way homewards, something shadowy, stooping, sprang up from the roadside and slip-slopped after his wagon—slip-slopped—slip-slopped—catching the thud of the horses' hoofs, and making its footsteps coincide.

All at once the shadowy figure swung itself up softly and remained for an instant, half-kneeling, in the body of the wagon. Then suddenly, noiselessly, it rose up, leaned over the absorbed Joel Mazarine, and with long, hooked, steely fingers caught the throat of the Master of Tralee under the grayish beard. They clenched there with a power like that of three men; for this was the kind of grip which, far away in the country of the Yang-tse-kiang, Li Choo had learned in the days when he had made youth a thing to be remembered.

No convulsive effort on the part of the victim could loosen that terrible grip; but the horses, responding to the first jerk of the reins following the attack, stood

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still, while a human soul was being wrenched out of the world behind them.

No word was spoken. From the moment the fingers clutched his throat Joel Mazarine could not speak, and Li Choo did his swift work in grim and ghastly silence.

It did not take long. When the vain struggles had ceased and the fingers were loosened, Li Choo's tongue clucked in his mouth, once, twice, thrice; and that was all. It was a ghastly sort of mirth, and it had in it a multitude of things. Among them was vengeance and wild justice, and the thing that comes down through innumerable years in the Oriental mind—that the East is greater than the West; that now and then the East must prove itself against the West with all the cruelty of the world's prime.

For a moment Li Choo stood and looked at the motionless figure, with the head fallen on the breast; then he put the reins carefully in the hands of the dead man, placed the fallen hat on his head, climbed down from the wagon, patted a horse as he slip-slopped by, and disappeared towards Tralee into the night, leaving what was left of Joel Mazarine in his wagon at the crossing of the trails.

As Li Choo stole swiftly away, he met two other figures, silent and shadowy, and somehow strangely unreal, like his own. After a moment's whisperings, they all three turned their faces again towards Tralee.

Once they stopped and listened. There was the sound of wagons. One was coming from the north—that is, from the direction of Tralee; the other was coming from the south-east—that is, Nolan Doyle's ranch.

Li Choo's tongue clucked in his mouth; then he made an exclamation in Chinese, at which the others clucked also, and then they moved on again.

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CHAPTER XVI

AT THE CROSS TRAILS

LIKE Joel Mazarine on his journey from Askatoon, Orlando, on his journey from Nolan Doyle's ranch, was absorbed, but his reflections were as different from those of the Master of Tralee as sunrise is from midnight; indeed, so bright was the light within Orlando's spirit that the very prairie around him seemed aflame. The moment with Louise in the garden lighted by the dim moon, the passing instant of perfect understanding, the touch of her hair upon his lips, her supple form yielding to his as he clasped her in his arms, had dropped like a curtain between him and the fateful episode in the main street of Askatoon.

That wonderful elation of youth on its first excursion into perfumed meads of Love possessed him. He had never had flutterings of the heart for any woman until his eyes met the eyes of Louise at their first meeting, and a new world had been opened up to him. He had been as naïve and native a human being with all his apparent foppishness, as had ever moved among men. What seemed his vanity had nothing to do with thoughts of womankind. It had been a decorative sense come honestly from picturesque forebears, and indeed from his own mother.

In truth, until the day he had met Louise, or rather until the day of the broncho-busting, and the fateful night on the prairie, he had never grown up. He was wise with the wisdom of a child—sheer instinct, right-

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ness of mind, real decision of character. His giggling laugh had been the undisciplined simplicity of the child, which, when he had reached manhood, had never been formalized by conventions. Something indefinite had marked him until Louise had come, and now he was definite, determined, alive with a new feeling which made his spirit sing—his spirit and his lips; for, as he came from Nolan Doyle's ranch to the Cross Trails, he kept humming to himself, between moments of silence in which he visualized Louise in a hundred attitudes, as he had seen her. There had come to him, without the asking even, that which Joel Mazarine, had he been as rich as any man alive or dead, could not have bought. That was why he hummed to himself in happiness.

Youth answering to youth had claimed its own; love springing from the dawn, brave and bright-eyed, had waved its wand towards that good country called Home. Never from the first had any thought come into the minds of either of these two that was not linked with the idea of home. Nothing of the jungle had been in their thoughts, though they had been tempted, and love and the moment's despair had stung them to take revenge in each other's arms; yet they had kept the narrow path. There was in their love something primeval, that belonged to the beginning of the world.

Orlando had almost reached the Cross Trails before he saw Mazarine's wagon standing in the way. At first he did not recognize the horses, and he called to the driver sitting motionless to move aside. He thought it to be some drunken ranchman.

Presently, however, coming nearer, he recognized the

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horses and the man. Standing up, Orlando was about to call out again in peremptory tones, when, suddenly, the spirit of death touched his senses, and his heart stood still for an instant.

As he looked at the motionless figure, he was only subconsciously aware of the thud of horses' hoofs coming down one of the side-trails. Springing to the ground, he approached Mazarine's wagon.

The horses neighed; it was a curious, lonely sound. For a moment he stood with his hand on the wheel looking at the still figure; then he reached out and touched Mazarine's knee.

"Hi, there!" he said.

There was no reply. He mounted the wagon, touched the dead man's shoulder, and then, with one hand, loosened the waistcoat and felt the heart. It was still. He examined the body. There was no wound. He peered into the face, and saw the distortion there. "Dead—dead!" he said in an awed voice.

The husband of Louise was dead. How he died, in one sense, did not matter. Louise's husband was dead; he would torture her no more. Louise was free!

Slowly he got down from the wagon, vaguely wondering what to do, so had the tragedy confused his brain for the moment. As he did so, he was conscious of another wagon and horses a few yards away.

"Who goes there?" called the voice of the new-comer.

"A friend," answered Orlando mechanically.

Presently the new-comer sprang down from his wagon and came over to Orlando.

"What is it, Mr. Guise?" he asked. "What's the trouble? . . . Who's that?" he addded, pointing to the dead body.

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"It's Mazarine. He's dead," answered Orlando quietly.

"Oh, good God!" said the other.

He was an insurance agent of the town of Askatoon, who, that very evening, had heard Orlando threaten the Master of Tralee—that if ever he passed him or met him, and Mazarine did not get out of the way, it would be the worse for him. Well, here in the trail were Orlando and Mazarine—and Mazarine was dead!

"Good God!" the new-comer repeated. Scarsdale was his name.

Then Orlando explained. "It's not what you think," he said. Then he told the story—such as there was to tell—of what had happened during the last few moments.

Scarsdale climbed up into the wagon, struck a light, looked at the body of Mazarine, at his face, and then lifted up the beard and examined the neck. There were finger-marks in the flesh.

"So, that's it," he said. "Strangled! He seems to have took it easy, sittin' there like that," he added as he climbed down.

"I don't understand it," remarked Orlando. "As you say, it's weird, his sitting there like that with the reins in his hands. I don't understand it!"

"I saw you getting down from the wagon," remarked Scarsdale meaningly.

"Say, do you really believe——?" began Orlando without agitation, but with a sudden sense of his own false position.

"It ain't a matter of belief," the other declared. "If there's an inquest, I've got to tell what I've seen. You know that, don't you?"

"That's all right," replied Orlando. "You've got

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to tell what you've seen, and so have I. I guess the truth will out. Come, let's move him on to Tralee. We'll lay him down in the bottom of the wagon, and I'll lead his horses with a halter. . . . No," he added, changing his mind, "you lead my horses, and I'll drive him home."

A moment afterwards, as the procession made its way to Tralee, Scarsdale said to himself:

"He must have nerves like iron to drive Mazarine home, if he killed him. Well, he's got them, and still they call him Giggles as if he was a silly girl!"

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CHAPTER XVII

THE SUPERIOR MAN

STUDENTS of life have noticed constantly that moral distinctions are not matters of principle but of certain peremptory rules found on nice calculations of the social mind. In the field of crime, responsibility is most often calculated, not upon the crime itself, but upon how the thing is done.

In Askatoon, no one would have been greatly shocked if, when Orlando Guise and Joel Mazarine met at the railway-station or in the main street, Orlando had killed Mazarine.

Mazarine would have been dead in either case; and he would have been killed by another hand in either case; but the attitude of the public would not have been the same in either case. The public would have considered the killing of Mazarine before the eyes of the world as justifiable homicide; its dislike of the man would have induced it to add the word *justifiable*.

But that Joel Mazarine should be killed by night without an audience, secretly—however righteously—shocked the people of Askatoon.

Had they seen the thing done, there would have been sensation, but no mystery; but night, secrecy, distance, mystery, all begot, not a reaction in Mazarine's favour, but a protest against the thing being done under cover, as it were, unhelped by popular observation. Also, to the Askatoon mind, that one man should kill another in open quarrel was courageous,—

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or might be courageous,—but for one man to kill another, whoever that other was, in a hidden way, was a barbarian business.

It seemed impossible to have any doubt as to who killed the man, though Orlando had not waited a moment after the body had been brought to Tralee, but had gone straight to the police, and told what had happened, so far as he knew it. He stated the exact facts.

The insurance man, Scarsdale, would not open his mouth until the inquest, which took place on the afternoon after the crime had been committed. It was held at Tralee. Great crowds surrounded the house, but only a few found entrance to the inquest room.

Immediately on opening the inquest, Orlando was called to tell his story. Every eye was fixed upon him intently; every ear was strained as he described his coming upon the isolated wagon and the dead man with the reins in his hands. It is hard to say if all believed his story, but the Coroner did, and Burlingame, his lawyer, also did.

Burlingame was present, not to defend Orlando, because it was not a trial, but to watch his interests in the face of staggering circumstantial evidence. To Burlingame's mind Orlando was not the man to kill another by strangling him to death. It was not in keeping with his character. It was too aboriginal.

The Coroner believed the story solely because Orlando's frankness and straightforwardness filled him with confidence. Also men of rude sense, like Jonas Billings, were willing to take bets, five to one, that Orlando was innocent.

The Young Doctor had not an instant's doubt, but he could not at first fix his suspicions in a likely quarter. He had examined the body, and there were no marks

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save bruises at the throat. In his evidence he said that enormous strength of hands had been necessary to kill so quickly, for it was clear the attack was so overpowering that there was little struggle.

The Coroner here interposed a question as to whether it would have been possible for anyone but a man to commit the crime. At his words everybody moved impatiently. It was certain he was referring to the absent wife. The idea of Louise committing such a crime, or being able to commit it, was ridiculous. The Coroner presently stated that he had only asked the question so as to remove this possibility from consideration.

The Young Doctor immediately said that probably no woman in the hemisphere could have committed the crime, which needed enormous strength of hands.

The Coroner looked round the room. "The widow, Mrs. Mazarine, is not here?" he said questioningly.

Nolan Doyle interposed. "Mrs. Mazarine is at my ranch. She came there yesterday evening at eight o'clock and remained with my wife and myself until twelve o'clock. The murder was committed before twelve o'clock. Mrs. Mazarine does not even know that her husband is dead. She is not well to-day, and we have kept the knowledge from her."

"Is she under medical care?" asked the Coroner.

Nolan Doyle nodded towards the Young Doctor, who said: "I saw Mrs. Mazarine at the house of Mr. Doyle last evening between the hours of eight and ten o'clock. To-day at noon also I visited her. She has a slight illness, and is not fit to take part in these proceedings."

At this point, Scarsdale, who had come upon Orlando and the dead man at the Cross Trails the night

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before, told his story. He did it with evident reluctance.

He spoke with hesitation, yet firmly and straightforwardly. He described how he saw Orlando climb down from the wagon where the dead man was. He added, however, that he had seen no struggle of any kind, though he had seen Orlando close to the corpse. Questioned by the Coroner, he described the scenes between Orlando and Mazarine in the main street of Askatoon and at the railway-station, both of which he had seen. He repeated Orlando's threat to Mazarine.

He was pressed as to whether Orlando showed agitation at the Cross Trails. He replied that Orlando seemed stunned but not agitated.

He was asked whether Orlando had shown the greater agitation at the Cross Trails or in the town when he threatened Mazarine. The answer was that he showed agitation only in the town. He was asked to repeat what Orlando had said to him. This he did accurately.

He was then asked by counsel whether he had arrived at any conclusion, when at the Cross Trails or afterwards, as to who committed the crime; but the Coroner would not permit the question. The Coroner added that it was only the duty of the witness to state what he had seen. Opinions were not permissible as evidence. The facts were in possession of the Court, and the Court could form its own judgment.

It was clear to everyone that the jury must return a verdict of wilful murder, and it was equally clear that the evidence was sufficient to fix suspicion upon Orlando, which must lead to his arrest. Two constables were in close attendance, and were ready to take charge of the man who, above all others, or so it was thought, had most reason to wish Mazarine out

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of the way. Indeed, Orlando had resigned himself to the situation, having realized how all the evidence was against him.

Recalling Orlando, the Coroner asked if it was the case that the death of Mazarine might be an advantage to him in any way. Orlando replied that it might be an advantage to him, but he was not sure. He added, however, that if, as the Coroner seemed to suggest, he himself was under suspicion, it ought to appear to all that to have murdered Mazarine in the circumstances would have put in jeopardy any possible advantage. That seemed logical enough, but it was presently pointed out to the Coroner that the same consideration had existed when Orlando had threatened Mazarine in the streets of Askatoon.

Presently the Coroner said: "There's a half-breed woman and a Chinaman, servants of the late Mr. Mazarine. Have the woman called."

It was at this moment that the Young Doctor and Orlando also were suddenly seized with a suspicion of their own. Orlando remembered how Mazarine had horsewhipped and maltreated Li Choo. The Young Doctor fixed his eyes intently on the body, and presently went to it again, raised the beard and looked at the neck. Coming back to his place, he nodded to himself. He had a clue. Now he understood about the enormous strength which had killed Mazarine practically without a struggle. He had noticed more than once the sinewy fingers of the Chinaman. As the inquest went on, he had again and again looked at the hands and arms of Orlando, and it had seemed impossible that, strong as he was, his fingers had the particular strength which could have done this thing.

The Coroner stood waiting for Rada to come, when

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suddenly the door opened and a Chinaman entered—one of the two who had appeared so strangely on the scene the day before. He advanced to the Coroner with both hands loosely hanging in the great sleeves of his blue padded coat, his eyes blinking slowly underneath the brown forehead and the little black skull-cap, and after making salutation with his arms, in curious, monotonous English with a quaint accent he said:

"Li Choo—Li Choo—he speak. He have to say. He send."

Holding up a piece of paper, he handed it to the Coroner and then stood blinking and immobile.

A few moments afterwards, the Coroner said: "I have received this note from Li Choo the Chinaman, sometime employed by the deceased Joel Mazarine. I will read it to you." Slowly he read:

"I say gloddam. That Orlando he not kill Mazaline. I say gloddam Mazaline. That Mazaline he Chlistian. He says Chlist his brother. Chlist not save him when Li Choo's fingers had Mazaline's thloat. That gloddam Mazaline I kill. That Mazaline kicked me, hit me with whip; where he kick, I sick all time. I not sleep no more since then. That Louise, it no good she stay with Mazaline. Confucius speak like this: 'Young woman go to young man; young bird is for green leaves, not dry branch.' That Louise good woman; that Orlando hell-fellow good. I kill Mazaline—gloddam, with my hands I kill. You want know all why Li Choo kill? You want kill Li Choo? You come!"

As the Coroner stopped reading, amid gasps of excitement, the Chinaman who had brought the note—with brown skin polished like a kettle, expressionless,

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save for the twinkling mystery [illegible]. [illegible] had made three motions of obeisance [illegible] his hands clasped in the great sleeve[illegible] with a kind of [illegible]

"He not come you; you come [illegible] of Chinese. He speak all—come. I show whe[illegible] curtains of [illegible]

"Where is he?" asked the Co[illegible] in gold [illegible]

The Chinaman did not reply [illegible] corners [illegible] he said: "He saclifice before you [illegible] with a great [illegible] man—come." He slip-slopped [illegible] religion—with though confident he would be fol[illegible] of the room [illegible]

Two minutes afterwards the [illegible] dim. Coming Young Doctor, Nolan Doyle an[illegible] place in its shal-low doorway of what looked [illegible] was, however, a big root-hous[illegible] Young Doctor and tables in the winter-time. It [illegible] to the dimness, Mazarine arrived at Tralee. [illegible] in effect, from the house, Li Choo and [illegible] men had gone the day befor[illegible] by the figure, rage, had come forth with th[illegible] the "Chinky," as Li Choo was [illegible] ranch.

As they arrived at the vaul[illegible] which would hold many ton[illegible] man came to the doorway. [illegible] who, in their sudden comin[illegible] like magic people to Ma[illegible] made upward and downw[illegible] clasped hands in the blue [illegible] perfect English, he said:

"In one minute Li Choo [illegible] moment of sacrifice. You [illegible] death of Mazarine. So he [illegible] die. You will hang him; [illegible] prevent you. He has told [illegible]

the sacrifice. When that is done you will enter and take him to prison."

The two constables standing beside the Coroner made a move forward, as though to show they meant to enforce the law without any palaver.

The Chinaman raised the palms of both hands at them. "Not yet," he said. Then he looked at the Coroner. "You are master. Will you not prevent them?"

The Coroner motioned the constables back. "All right," he said. "You seem to speak good English."

"I come from England—from Oxford University," answered the Chinaman with dignity. "I have learned English for many years. I am the son of Duke Ki. I came to see my uncle, the brother of Duke Ki. He is making sacrifice before you take him."

"Well, I'm blasted," said Jonas Billings from the crowd. "Chinese dukes, eh! What's it all about?"

"Reg'lar hocus-pocus," remarked the vagabond brother of Rigby the chemist.

At that moment little coloured lights suddenly showed in the darkness of the root-house, and there was the tinkling of a bell. Then a voice seemed calling, but softly, with a long, monotonous, thrilling note.

"Many may not come," said the Chinaman at the door to the Coroner, as he turned and entered the low doorway.

A minute afterwards the two constables held back the crowd from the doorway of the root-house, from the threshold of which a few wooden steps descended to the ground inside.

A strange sight greeted the eyes of those permitted to enter.

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The root-house had been transformed. What had been a semi-underground place composed of scantlings, branches of trees and mother earth, with a kind of vaulted roof, had been made into a sort of Chinese temple. All round the walls were hung curtains of black and yellow, decorated with dragons in gold, and above, suspended by cords at the four corners, was a rug or banner of white ornamented with a great tortoise—the sacred animal of Chinese religion—with gold eyes and claws. All round the side of the room were set coloured lights, shaded and dim. Coming from the bright outer sunlight, the place in its shadowed state seemed half-sepulchral.

When the Coroner, Orlando, the Young Doctor and the others had accustomed themselves to the dimness, they saw at the end of the chamber—for such, in effect, it had been made with its trappings and decorations—a figure seated upon the ground. Near by the figure, on either hand, there were standards bearing banners, and the staffs holding the banners were bound in white silk, with long streamers hanging down. Half enclosing the banners were fanlike screens. Along the walls also were flags with toothed edges. The figure was seated on a mat of fine bamboo in the midst of this strange scheme of decoration. Behind him, and drawn straight across the chamber, was a sheet of fine white cloth, embroidered with strange designs. He was clothed in a rich jacket of blue, and a pair of sandal-like shoes was placed neatly in front of the bamboo mat. On either side and in front of all, raised a little from the ground, were bowls or calabashes containing fruit, grain and dried and pickled meats. It was all orderly, circumspect, weird, and even stately though the place was small. Finally, in front of the

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motionless figure was a tiny brazier in which was a small fire.

Before the spectators had taken in the whole picture, the Chinaman who had entered with them came and stood on the right of the space occupied by the mat, near to the banners and the screens, and under a yellow light which hung from the vaulted roof.

The figure on the fine bamboo mat was Li Choo, but not the Li Choo which Tralee and Askatoon had known. He was seated with legs crossed in Oriental fashion and with head slightly bowed. His face was calm and dignified. It had an impassiveness which made an interminable distance between him and those who had till now looked upon him as a poor Chinky, doing a roustabout's work on a ranch, the handy-man, the Jack-of-all-trades. Yet in spite of the menial work which he had done, it was now to be seen that the despised Li Choo had still lived his own life, removed by centuries and innumerable leagues from his daily slavery.

As they looked at him, brooding, immobile, strange, he lifted his head, and the excessive brightness of his black eyes struck with a sense of awe all who saw. It was absurd that Li Choo, the hireling, "Yellow-phiz," as he had also been called, should here command a situation with the authority of one who ruled.

Presently he spoke, not in broken English, but in Chinese. It was interpreted by the Chinaman standing on the right by the screens, in well cadenced, cultured English.

"I have to tell you," said Li Choo—the other's voice repeated the words after him—"that I am the son of greatness, of a ruler in my own land. It was by the Yang-tze-kiang, and there were riches and pleasant

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things in the days of my youth. In the hunt, at the tavern, I was first amongst them all. I had great strength. I once killed a bear with my bare hands. My hands had fame.

"I had office in the city where my cousin ruled. He was a bad man, and was soon forgotten, though his children mourn for him as is the custom. I killed him. He gave counsel concerning the city when there was war, but his counsel was that of a traitor, and the city was lost. Now behold, it is written that he who has given counsel about the country or its capital should perish with it when it comes into peril. He would not die—so I killed him; but not before he had heaped upon me baseness and shame. So I killed him.

"Yet it is written that when a minister kills his ruler, all who are in office with him shall without mercy kill him who did the deed. That is the law. It was the word of the Son of Heaven that this should be. But those who were in office with me would not kill me, because they approved of what I did. Yet they must kill me, since it was the law. What was there to do but in the night to flee, so that they who should kill me might not obey the law? Had I remained, and they had not obeyed the law, they also would have been slain."

He paused for a moment and then went on. "So I fled, and it is many years since by the Yang-tze-kiang I killed my ruler and saved my friends. Yet I had not been faithful to the ancient law, and so through the long years I have done low work among a low people. This was for atonement, for long ago by the Yang-tze-kiang I should have died, and behold, I have lived until now. To save my friends from the pain of killing me I fled and lived; but at last here at this place I

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said to myself that I must die. So, secretly, I made this cellar into a temple.

"That was a year ago, and I sent to my brother the Duke Ki to speak to him what was in my mind, so that he might send my kinsmen to me, that when I came to die, it should be after the manner ordained by the Son of Heaven; that my body should be clothed according to the ancient rites by my own people, my mouth filled with rice, and the meats, and grains and fruits of sacrifice be placed on a mat at the east of my body when I died; that the curtain should be hung before my corpse; that I should be laid upon a mat of fine bamboo, and dressed, and prepared for my grave, and put into a noble coffin as becomes a superior man. Did not the Son of Heaven say that we speak of the *end* of a superior man, but we speak of the *death* of a small man? I was a superior man, but I have lived as a small man these many days; and now, behold, I am drawing near to my end as a superior man.

"I wished that nothing should be forgotten; that all should be done when I, of the house of the Duke Ki, came to my superior end. So, these my kinsmen came, these of my family, to be with me at my going, to call my spirit back from the roof-top with face turned to the north, to leap before my death-mat, to wail and bare the shoulders and bind the sackcloth about the head.

"I have served among the low people doing low things, and now I would die, but in the correct way. Once to the listeners Confucius said: 'The great mountain must crumble; the strong beam must break; the wise man must wither away like a plant.' So it is. It is my duty to go to my end, for the time is far spent, and I should do what my friends must have done had I stayed in my ancestral city."

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Again he paused, and now he rocked his body backwards and forwards for a moment; then presently he continued: "Yet I would not go without doing good. There should be some act among the low people by which I should be remembered. So, once again, I killed a man. He could not withstand the strength of my fingers—they were like steel upon his throat. As a young man my fingers were like those of three men.

"Shall a man treat his wife as she, Louise, was treated? Shall a man raise his hand against his wife, and live? also, was he to live—the low man—that struck a high man like me with his hands, with the whip, with his feet, stamping upon me on the ground? Was that to be, and he live? Were the young that should have but one nest to be parted, to have only sorrow, if Joel lived? So I killed him with my hands" (he slightly raised his clasped hands, as though to emphasize what he said, but the gesture was grave and quiet) "—so I killed him, and so I must die.

"It was the duty of my friends to kill me by the Yang-tze-kiang. It is your duty, you of the low people, to kill me who has killed a low man; but my friends by the Yang-tze-kiang were glad that the ruler died, and you of the low people are glad that Joel is dead. Yet it is your duty to kill me. . . . But it shall not be."

He quickly reached out his hands and drew the burning brazier close to his feet; then, suddenly, from a sleeve of his robe he took a little box of the sacred tortoise-shell, pressed his lips to it, opened it, poured its contents upon the flame, leaned over with his face close to the brazier and inhaled the little puff of smoke that came from it.

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So for a few seconds—and then he raised himself and sat still with eyes closed and hands clasped in his long sleeves. Presently his head fell forward on his breast.

A pungent smell passed through the chamber. It produced for the moment dizziness in all present. Then the sensation cleared away. The Chinaman at the right of Li Choo looked steadfastly at him; then, all at once, he bared his shoulders and quickly bound a piece of sackcloth round his head. This done, he raised his voice and cried out with a monotonous ululation, and at once a second voice cried out in a long wailing call.

Outside Li Choo's kinsman, with his face turned to the north, was calling his spirit back, though he knew it would not come.

At the first sound of the voice crying outside, the Chinaman beside Li Choo leaped thrice in front of the brazier, the mat and the moveless body.

At that moment the Young Doctor came forward. He who had leaped stood between him and the body of Li Choo.

"You must not come. Li Choo, the superior man, is dead," he protested.

"I am a doctor," was the reply. "If he is dead, the law will not touch him, and you shall be alone with him, but the law must know that he is dead. That is the way that prevails among the 'low people,'" he added ironically.

The Chinaman stood aside, and the Young Doctor stooped, felt the pulse, touched the heart and lifted up the head and looked into Li Choo's sightless eyes.

"He is dead," he said, and he came back again to the Coroner and the others. "Let's get out of this,"

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he added. "He is beyond our reach now. No need for an inquest here. He has killed himself." Then he caught Orlando's hand in a warm grip.

As they left the chamber, the kinsman of Li Choo was gently laying the body down upon the bamboo mat. At the doorway the other son of the Duke Ki was still monotonously calling back the departed spirit. . . .

The inquest on Joel Mazarine was ended presently, and Nolan Doyle and the Young Doctor set out to tell Louise that a "low man," once her husband, had paid a high price for all that he had bought of the fruits of life out of due season.

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CHAPTER XVIII

YOUTH HAS ITS WAY

"Aw, Doctor dear, there's manny that's less use in the wurruld than Chinamen, and I'd like to see more o' them here-away," remarked Patsy Kernaghan to the Young Doctor in the springtime of another year. "Stren'th of mind is all right, but stren'th of fingers is better still."

"You're a bloodthirsty pagan, Patsy," returned the Young Doctor.

"Hell to me sowl, then, didn't Li Choo pull things straight? I'm not much of a murd'ring man meself—I haven't the stren'th with me fingers, but there's manny a time I'd like to do what Li Choo done. . . . Shure, I don't want to be sp'akin' ill of the dead, but look at it now. There was ould Mazarine, breakin' the poor child's heart, as fine a fella as iver trod the wurruld achin' for her, and his life bein' spoilt by the goin's on at Tralee. Then in steps the Chinky and with stren'th of mind and stren'th of fingers puts things right."

"No, no, Patsy, you've got bad logic and worse morals in your head. As you say, things were put right, but trouble enough came of it."

"Divils me darlin', Doctor, it was bound to come all right some time. Shure, wasn't it natural the child should be all crumpled up like and lose her head for a while? Wasn't it natural she should fight out agin' takin' the property the leviathin left her, whin she

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knew there was another will he'd spoke on a paper to the lawyer the night he died, though he hadn't signed it? And isn't it so that yourself it was talked her round!"

The Young Doctor waved a hand reprovingly, but Patsy continued:

"Now, lookin' back on it, don't ye think it was clever enough what you said till her? 'Do justice to yourself and to others, little lady,' sez you. 'Be just—divide the place up; give two-thirds of it away to the children of Joel's first two wives and keep one-third, which is yours by law in anny case. For why should it be that you should give iverythin' and get nothin'? He had the best of you—of your girlhood and your youth,' sez you. 'Shure y'are entitled to bread and meat, and a roof over you, as a wife, and as one that got nothin' from your married life of what ought to be got by honest girls like you, or by anny woman, if it comes to that,' sez you. Aw, shure then, I know you said it, because, didn't she tell it all to Norah Doyle, and didn't Norah tell Nolan, and me sittin' by and glad enough that the cleverest man betune here and the other side of the wurruld talked her round! Aw, how you talk, y'r anner! Shure, isn't it the wonder that you don't talk the dead back to the wurruld out of which you help them? I might ha' been a great man meself"—he grinned—"if I'd had your eddication, but here I am, a 'low man' as Li Choo said, takin' me place simple as a babe."

"Patsy, you save my life," remarked the Young Doctor. "You save my life daily. That's why I'm glad you're getting a good home at last."

"At Slow Down Ranch, with her that's to be its queen! Well, isn't that like her to be thinkin' of

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others? As a rule the rich is so busy lookin' afther what they've got that they're not worryin' about the poor; but she thought of me, didn't she?"

The Young Doctor nodded, and Patsy pursued his tale. "Haven't I see her day in, day out, at Nolan Doyle's ranch, and don't I understan' why it is she's not set foot in Tralee since the ould one left it feet foremost, for his new seven-foot home, housed in a bit of wood—him that had had the run of the wurruld? She'll set no foot in Tralee at all anny time, if she can help it—that's the breed of her.

"Well, it is as it is, and what's goin' to be will plaze every mother's son in Askatoon. Giggles they called him! A bit of a girl they thought him! What's he turned out to be, though he's giggling still? Why, a man that's got the double cinch on Askatoon. Even that fella Burlingame had nothin' to say ag'in' him; and when Burlingame hasn't anny mud to throw, then you must stop and look hard. Shure, the blessed Virgin, or the Almighty himself, couldn't escape the tongue of Augustus Burlingame—not even you."

The Young Doctor burst out laughing. "'The Blessed Mary, or the Almighty himself—not even you!' Well, Patsy, you're a wonder," he said.

"Aw, you're not goin' to get off by scoffin' at me," remarked Patsy. "Shure, what did Augustus Burlingame say of you?—well now, what did he say?"

"Yes, Patsy, what was it?" urged the other.

"Shure, he criticized you. He called you 'Squills,' and said you'd helped more people intil the wurruld than out of it."

"You call that criticism, Patsy?"

"Whichever way you look at it, hasn't it an ugly face? Is it a kindness to man to bring him into the

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I know you said it.
Norah Doyle, and
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"Patsy, you save my
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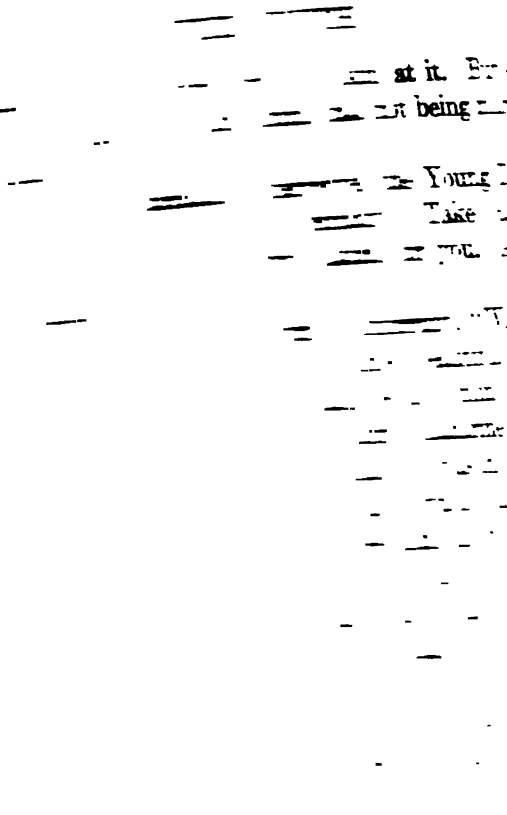

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ninst her. They just looked and looked at each ıer without a word. Like months it seemed. They ked, and looked, as though they was tryin' to read ıe story in each other's eyes, and then she give a l of joyful moan, and intil his arms she went like ·stlin' bird.

He raised up her head, and—well, now, y'r anner, ·er saw anything I liked better. There niver had a girl in his life, and there niver was a man in –not one that mattered, till they two took up each other, and it's a thing—well, y'r anner, I'd ›roud man if I could write it down. It's a story . take its place beside the ancient ones."

Young Doctor looked at Patsy meditatively. ·," said he, "the difference between the north e south of Ireland is that in the south they are ·s——" He paused.

. you haven't finished, y'r anner," said Ker-

in the north they think they are," continued .ng Doctor. "I'd like to see those two as your ·ront of your mind saw them, Patsy."

well then, you couldn't do it, Doctor dear, for ·ver been in love. Shure, there's no heart till wered the Irishman, and took another pinch ith a flourish.

·o-like in her bright-coloured, figured gown. l flower in her hair and her gray curls danc- at her temples, a little old lady trotted up the big sitting-room of Slow Down Ranch, ·bly and insistently. One ironically minded said she chirruped, for her words came out ·sical, if staccato, notes, and she shook her

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wurruld? That's wan way of lookin' at it. But pose he meant the other thing, that not being ma. you——"

"Patsy Kernaghan," interjected the Young Dc sternly, "you're not fit company. Take care, there'll be no Slow Down Ranch for you. An mind——"

Now it was Patsy's turn to interrupt: "Watch now, I think that wan of the most beautiful thing iver saw was them two young people comin' togeth Five long months it was, afther Mazarine was p away before she spoke with him. It was in the gard at Nolan's ranch, and even then it wasn't aisy till he Not that she didn't want to see him all the time; not I'll be bound, that she didn't say, when you and Nolar first told her the mastodon was dead, 'Thank God I'm free!' But, there he was, flung out of the wurruld without a minute's notice, and with the black thing in his heart. Shure you'll be understandin' it a thousand times better than meself, y'r anner."

He took a pinch of snuff from a little box, offered it to the Young Doctor and continued his story.

"Well, as I said, whin five months had gone by they met. By chanct I saw the meetin'. Watch me now, I'll tell you how it was. She was sittin' on a bench in the gardin, lookin' in front of her and seein' nothin' but what was in her mind's eye, and who can tell what she would be seein'! There she sat sweet as a saint, very straight up, the palms of her hands laid on the bench on either side, as though they was supportin' her—like a statue she looked. I watched her manny a minute, but she niver moved. Well, there she was, lookin'—lookin' in front o' her, whin round the big tree in the middle of the gardin he come and stood

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forninst her. They just looked and looked at each other without a word. Like months it seemed. They looked, and looked, as though they was tryin' to read some story in each other's eyes, and then she give a kind of joyful moan, and intil his arms she went like a nestlin' bird.

"He raised up her head, and—well, now, y'r anner, I niver saw anything I liked better. There niver had been a girl in his life, and there niver was a man in hers—not one that mattered, till they two took up with each other, and it's a thing—well, y'r anner, I'd be a proud man if I could write it down. It's a story that'd take its place beside the ancient ones."

The Young Doctor looked at Patsy meditatively. "Patsy," said he, "the difference between the north and the south of Ireland is that in the south they are all poets——" He paused.

"Well, you haven't finished, y'r anner," said Kernaghan.

"And in the north they think they are," continued the Young Doctor. "I'd like to see those two as your eyes in front of your mind saw them, Patsy."

"Aw, well then, you couldn't do it, Doctor dear, for you've niver been in love. Shure, there's no heart till ye!" answered the Irishman, and took another pinch of snuff with a flourish.

Flamingo-like in her bright-coloured, figured gown, with a wild flower in her hair and her gray curls dancing gently at her temples, a little old lady trotted up and down the big sitting-room of Slow Down Ranch, talking volubly and insistently. One ironically minded would have said she chirruped, for her words came out in not unmusical, if staccato, notes, and she shook her

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shrivelled, ringed fingers reprovingly at a stalwart young man.

Once or twice, as she seemed to threaten him with what the poet called "The slow, unmoving finger of scorn," he giggled. It was evident that he was at once amused and troubled. This voice had cherished and chided him all his life, and he could measure accurately what was behind it. It was a wilful voice. It had the insistance which power gives, and to a woman—or to most women—power is either money or beauty, since, in the world as it is, office and authority are denied them. Beauty was gone from the face of the ancient dame, but she still had much money, and, on rare occasions, it gave her a little arrogance. It did so now as she admonished her beloved son, who at any time would have renounced fortune, or hope of fortune, for some wilful idea of his own. A less sordid modern did not exist.

He was not very effective in the contest of tongue between his mother and himself. As the talk went on he foresaw that he was to be beaten; yet he persisted, for he loved a joy-wrangle, as he called it, with his mother. He had argued with her many a time, just to see her in a harmless passion, and note how the youth of her came back, giving high colour to the wrinkled face, and how the eyes shone with a brightness which had been constant in them long ago. They were now quarrelling over that ever-fruitful cause of antagonism—the second woman in the life of a man. Yet, strange to say, the flamingo-like Eugénie Guise, was fighting for the second woman, not against her.

"I'll say it all again and again and again till you have sense, Orlando," she declared. "Your old mother hasn't lived all these years for nothing. I'm not think-

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ing of you; I'm thinking of her." She pointed towards the door of another room, from which came sounds of laughter—happy laughter—in which a man's and a woman's voices sounded. "On the day she comes into this house—and that's the day after to-morrow—I shall go. I'll stand at the door and welcome you, and see you have a good wedding-breakfast and that it all goes off grand, then I shall vanish."

Orlando made a helpless gesture of the hand. "Well, mother, as I said, it will make us both unhappy—Louise as much as me. You and I have never been parted except for a few weeks at a time, and I'm sure I don't know how I could stand it."

"Rather late to think about it," the other returned. "You can't have two women spoiling you in one house and being jealous of each other—oh, you needn't toss your fingers! Even two women that love each other can't bear the competition. Just because I love her and want her to be happy, off I go to your Aunt Amelia to live with her. She's poor, and I'll still have someone to boss as I've bossed you. I never knew how much I loved Amelia till she got sick last year when everything terrible was happening here. I'm going, Orlando—

> Two birds hopping on one branch
> Would kill the joy of Slow Down Ranch——

"There, I made that up on the moment. It's true, even if it is poetry."

"It isn't poetry, mother," was the reply, and there was an ironical look in Orlando's eyes. "Poetry's the truth of life," he hastened to add carefully, "and it's not poetry to say that you could be a kill-joy."

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The little lady tossed her head. "Well, you'll never have a chance to prove it, for I'm taking the express east on the night of your wedding. That's settled. Amelia needs me, and I'm going to her. . . . Your wedding-present will be the ranch and a hundred thousand dollars," she added.

"You're the sun-dried fruit of Paradise, Mother," Orlando said, taking her by the arms.

"I heard the Young Doctor call me a bird of Paradise once," she returned. "People don't know how sharp my ears are. . . . But I never stored it up against him. Taste is born in you, and if people haven't got it in the cradle, they never have it. I suppose *his* mother went around in a black alpaca and wore her hair like a wardress in a jail. I'm sorry for him—that's all."

"Suppose I should get homesick for you and run away from her!" remarked Orlando slyly.

"Run away *with* her to me," chirruped Eugénie, with a vain little laugh.

Suddenly her manner changed, and she looked at her son with dreamy intensity. "You are so wonderfully young, my dear," she said, "and I am very old. I had much happiness with your father while he lived. He was such a wise man. Always he gave in to me in the little things, and I gave in to him in all the big things. He almost made me a sensible woman."

There was a strange wistfulness in her face. Through all the years, down beneath everything, there had been the helpless knowledge in her own small, garish mind that she had little sense; now she realized that she was given a chance to atone for all her pettiness by doing one great sensible thing.

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Orlando was about to embrace her, but she briskly turned away. She could not endure that. If he did it, the pent-up motherhood would break forth, and her courage would take flight. She was something more than the "parokeet of Pernambukoko," as Patsy Kernaghan had called her.

She went to the door of the other room. "I want to talk to the Young Doctor about Amelia," she said. "He's clever, and perhaps he could give her a good prescription. I'll send Louise to you. It's nicer courting in this room where you can see the garden and the grand hills. You're going to give Louise the little gray mare you lassooed last year, aren't you? I always think of Louise when I look at that gray mare. You had to break the pony's heart before she *could* be what she is—the nicest little thing that ever was broken by a man's hand; and Louise, she had to have her heart broken too. Your father and I were almost of an age—he was two years older, and we had our youth together. And you and Louise are so wonderfully young, too. Be good to her, son. She's never been married. She was only in prison with that old lizard. What a horrible mouth he had! It's shut now," she added remorselessly. Opening the door of the other room, she disappeared.

A moment later, Louise entered upon Orlando.

The vanished months had worked wonders in her. She was like the young summer beyond the open windows, alive to her finger-tips, shyly radiant, with shining eyes, yet in their depths an alluring pensiveness never to leave them altogether. Knowledge had come to her; an apprehending soul was speaking in her face. The sweetness of her smile, as she looked

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at the man before her, was such as could only be distilled from the bitter herbs of the desert.

"Oh, Orlando!" she said joyously, as she came forward.

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